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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE RE-ENTRY TO EMPLOYMENT PROCESS FOLLOWING SEVERE SPINAL CORD INJURY

BY

©

JODI L. ABBOTT

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION.

Department of Educational Psychology

EDMONTON, ALBERTA
FALL , 1993

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August 23, 1993

I dedicate this thesis to ...

Michael for his patience, endless support and love

ABSTRACT

The thesis explored the post-injury employment experience of spinal cord injured males who are functionally quadriplegic. The qualitative investigation entailed exploratory questioning that allowed informants to express the essence of the individual employment experience while probing at common issues generated from all participants.

Six informants comprised the purposeful sample selected from the membership of the Canadian Paraplegic Association, Alberta Division. The sample included males who have sustained severe spinal cord injuries such that they are quadriplegic. The participants were of differing ages and perceive themselves to be successfully employed. The time since onset of the spinal cord injury was restricted only by the participant's ability to clearly reflect upon and articulate his experience of the re-entry process. Participants were required to fulfill the criteria of "employment" as defined by the performance of job duties in or outside of the home for 30 to 40 hours per week in exchange for competitive monetary remuneration.

Participants engaged in an initial interview, a review of the transcribed narrative, and a follow-up interview to validate the data. The researcher employed thematic analysis that entailed a three part process that began with the extraction of meaning units, tag identification and synthesis of the data. A period of incubation where the researcher removed herself from the data comprised the second part of the analytic process. The final phase of data analysis involved theme construction and the validation of the analysis by the research participants.

The results of this enquiry indicated that participants passed through a four phase re-entry process with the end result being the securement of competitive employment. An integrative model of re-entry that incorporates components of the self and factors of the workplace was delineated. The sharing of personal experiences by the participants suggested a profile of successfully employed workers with quadriplegia.

The communication of the experiences of this unique group of workers with disabilities will serve to enlighten vocational rehabilitation professionals, prospective employers and other persons with disabilities. In turn, it is anticipated that such information will reverse the barriers to employment and encourage the development of a representative workforce.

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LIST OF SYMBOLS

F: (0-00)	denotes line numbers from Fred's initial interview
JD: (0-00)	denotes line numbers from Jordan's initial interview
J: (0-00)	denotes line numbers from Joseph's initial interview
M: (0-00)	denotes line numbers from Michael's initial interview
R: (0-00)	denotes line numbers from Ron's initial interview
W: (0-00)	denotes line numbers from Wayne's initial interview
(*0-00)	denotes line numbers from validation interview - can be applied to all participants

Chapter One: Introduction

Prejudicial attitudes, architectural barriers and procedural guidelines (such as those defined by standards of work performance, hours of work and job descriptions) inadvertently curb full labour force participation through the exclusion of specific groups. As is recognized by the Employment Equity Act (1986), women, racial minorities, aboriginal peoples and persons with disabilities have been historically disadvantaged in the labour market. Designated as targets for the development of a representative workforce, employment equity theoretically works "to correct the disadvantage and discrimination in employment that affects" these groups (Agocs, Burr, & Somerset, 1992, p. 8). However, non-traditional sources of human capital may remain outside of competitive employment if attention is not given to the constraints of the workplace and the experiences of the designated groups.

Although constituents of each designated group identify unique employment concerns, persons with disabilities experience multiple disadvantages. For example, as well as coping with physical or mental limitations, alternate group membership (being female, black, or Native Indian) magnifies the disadvantage in accessing labour force activity. Statistics indicate that in comparison to the other designated groups, persons with disabilities have made smaller gains in labour force participation since the introduction of the Employment Equity Act (1986). In 1988, less than 2% of positions governed by the Employment Equity Act and the Federal Contractors Program were held by people with disabilities. This represents a mere increase of 0.12% participation from the previous year (Vargo, 1991). In contrast, women represented 42% of the workforce under the Act with an increase in participation of 1.22% from 1987 (Vargo, 1991). Notwithstanding the urgency of employment issues specific to the other designated groups, the focus of this study is on persons with disabilities. More specifically, the thesis explores the post-injury employment experiences of spinal cord injured males who are functionally quadriplegic. The qualitative investigation used exploratory questioning that allowed informants to express the experience of gaining employment as they re-entered the work force.

In spite of the anticipated change of labour participation in the near future (Lindroth, 1982; Krahn, 1991; McKay, 1991), the Health and Activity Limitation Survey - HALS (1986) indicated that in excess of 50% of Canadians with disabilities were either unemployed or not actively engaged in the labour force. When compared to non-disabled Canadians, unemployment and inactivity in the labour market is noticeably lower at 30% (Ross & Shillington, 1990). This imbalance of representation is further exemplified by Thomas and Thomas (1985) who report that approximately 63% of people employed with disabilities live in poverty. Under-represented in managerial and professional positions (Galt, 1993; Roessler, 1987; Ross & Shillington, 1990; Vargo, 1991), this group find themselves in clerical jobs with low pay. Extraordinary expenses (for example, specialized housing and/or attendant care) and inadequate financial remuneration in exchange for employment activity creates a situation where individuals merely struggle to survive. In fact, compensation and benefit packages of the workplace often do not outweigh the costs of the disability, leaving unemployment as the only option (Shaw &

McMahon, 1985).

Suspended career development for those who penetrate the labour market and low rates of labour force participation are distinct characteristics of the employment activity of persons with disabilities (Agocs et al., 1992; Karp, 1989; Vargo, 1991). Thus, the experience for individuals with disabilities who do obtain employment is unique. They face significant challenges in the re-entry process and work hard to maintain successful employment. It will be illustrated that the general exclusion of this group from productive and competitive employment may in part be a result of role prescription. The historical basis of the role of persons with disabilities in society will provide context to their current position outside of the labour force.

Although persons with disabilities struggle to alter their economic standing, preconceived notions about their abilities and status in the work sphere continue to be manifested in the attitudes of employers (Parker & Hansen, 1981). Unfortunately, longstanding stereotypes have contributed to work sites that are not conducive to full employment participation for persons with disabilities. For example, architectural barriers that prevent access to the worksite and policies that inadvertently discriminate are problematic (Parker & Hansen, 1981). Such physical and procedural obstacles to employment are grounded in attitudes and perpetuated by individuals and organizations.

In order to erode the attitudinal and structural barriers that prevent full employment participation, fundamental change that reflects the experiences of people with disabilities is required (Agocs et al., 1992). In an attempt to fully understand these experiences, an examination of literature relevant to the barriers (physical, procedural and attitudinal) is presented. A brief overview of the physiology of spinal cord injury and resulting deficit in physical functioning of the participants also provides information on the requirement for technical aids and worksite modifications. Finally, literature concerning the provision of vocational rehabilitation is reviewed in an effort to present future implications for vocational counselling and disability related work programs.

This study utilized qualitative methodology in the process of understanding and communicating the employment experience following the onset of spinal cord injury. The inquiry begins with an exploration of the employment experience followed by an examination of the details of that experience. Typically the interview started with the participants recalling their experiences of re-entering the work force after spinal cord injury. Some of the issues examined were the transition from pre to post-injury occupations, the interview process, and the details of the work environment. Nearing the conclusion of the interview participants share their opinions on how they might advise others who are searching for employment following the onset of severe physical disability. Transcripts of in-depth participant interviews were analyzed in such a way that the data remained representative of the individual's experience. The interview participants, identified by pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality, included six functionally quadriplegic males between the ages of 32 and 48 who perceive themselves to be successfully employed. The time since onset of the spinal cord injury was restricted only by the participant's ability to clearly reflect upon and articulate his experience of the re-entry process. Participants were required to fulfill the criterion of "employment" as defined by the performance of job duties for 30 to 40 hours per week in exchange for competitive monetary remuneration. Although this excludes the provision of volunteer work and sheltered workshop employment, it encompasses the individual who is employed within or outside of the home.

Importance of the Study

Communicating the re-entry to employment experience of persons who have sustained a spinal cord injury provides an understanding of the challenges and triumphs faced by a minority group attempting to secure career success. The formulation of guidelines for Employment Equity in hiring practice, the ongoing desire for independence by people with disabilities, and the emergence of programs aimed at vocational rehabilitation have recently challenged preconceived notions of the role of persons with disabilities in the society. According to Shaw and McMahon (1985) the "return to gainful employment has been the most emphasized non-medical goal in the rehabilitation of persons with spinal cord injuries" (p. 188). However, several studies indicate that very few people (as few as 13%) who have sustained a spinal cord injury obtain competitive employment following the onset of the physical disability (DeVivo et al., 1982, 1987; Kemp & Vash, 1971). This discrepancy points to a need for continued examination of issues relevant to vocational rehabilitation.

The majority of work in the area of employment for persons with disabilities has focused on the predictors of career success while utilizing the research methodology of the quantitative paradigm. Trieschmann's model (POE) (1980, 1987) that encompasses the interaction of psychosocial, organic, and environmental factors in predicting adjustment to disability and outcome of vocational development is one example of such research. El Ghatit and Hanson (1978), in a study of the variables associated with securing and maintaining employment, listed several predictors that interact with the factors noted in the POE model. This study indicated that spinal cord injured persons who were more likely to obtain employment were paraplegic rather than quadriplegic, educated beyond high school, and were independent with regard to personal care and hygiene. Karp (1989), found that "many persons with spinal injury would like to express themselves through work but find that there are too many obstacles preventing them from doing so (e.g., architectural barriers, financial disincentives, or employer attitudes)" (p. 4). Thus, environmental variables were deemed important in determining vocational outcomes.

Other studies (Curnow, 1989; Krause, 1990; McCarthy, 1982) have also addressed issues that relate to the interaction of personal attributes, the degree of support offered by the environment (and the support system of the disabled individual) and characteristics of the physical disability (such as health and endurance). For example, McCarthy (1982) ascertained that it is necessary that a partnership between employers, rehabilitation professionals and persons with disabilities be developed so that reciprocal responsibility is taken in the achievement of vocational goals. Roessler (1987) supported this view by proposing that policies inclusive of awareness initiatives (for example, sensitivity training), vocational rehabilitation and employment equity entail a cooperative enterprise that leads to philosophical and action-oriented change in the process of encouraging labour force participation of disabled workers. Although such measures have been instituted in Canada, elevated unemployment rates for persons with disabilities continue. In order to address this issue Shaw and McMahon (1982) have suggested that "there appears to be a clear need for more job-related information which will assist rehabilitation professionals in better serving the vocational needs of spinal cord injured individuals" (p. 48).

The intention of this study is to provide information to rehabilitation professionals so that they are better equipped to serve their clientele. The information comes from the first hand experiences of those who have successfully re-entered the workforce following severe spinal cord injury. The communication of participants' stories brings personal perspective to the process of accessing competitive employment following traumatic injury. Although stakeholder groups have been consulted in the implementation of employment equity legislation, awareness initiatives and vocational rehabilitation, somehow the experiences of these individuals has been lost. This study attempted to bring the perspective of the participants to the forefront for consideration. It is important for vocational professionals to have a greater understanding of the re-entry to employment process from the perspectives of those who have experienced it.

Roth and Sugerman (1984) have addressed this area from a phenomenological perspective. They found that "vocational rehabilitation personnel regard the world of work as a natural order and try to adjust the disabled person to that world" (Roth & Sugerman, 1984, p. 366). This places the focus of adjustment on the person with the physical disability and away from the environment. Responsibility on the part of the rehabilitation practitioner is therefore minimized.

To conclude this chapter of the thesis, I would like to reiterate the importance of the topic under investigation. First, the scarcity of research utilizing the qualitative frame of enquiry with regard to the experience of employment invites the novice researcher to gain experience with the methodology as well as to contribute to the literature base. Secondly, and more importantly, the expression of the first hand experience of those who have successfully re-entered the work force following a traumatic injury, such as a lesion to the spinal cord, serves to educate those who are unfamiliar with this issue and confirm the experiences of those who are. This study is important as the participants' stories seem to offer reasons for the discrepancy between the number of employed individuals with disabilities in spite of the recent attention given to the area of vocational rehabilitation. Notwithstanding the introduction of employment equity, the ongoing focus on raising awareness, and the availability of vocational services, very few persons with disabilities engage in competitive employment. Listening to the stories of participants who have secured employment positions illustrates the importance of their personal attributes and connection with external resources in the re-entry process. Such information may be shared with others who are embarking on a return to work following spinal cord injury with the hope that this insight will better prepare them for the journey of obtaining competitive work. Vocational rehabilitation professionals can mediate this process by sharing the perspective of participants with others who have sustained spinal cord injury as they search for employment.

The following thesis portrays the unique experiences of the participants while connecting the return to work process to the existing literature in this field. As such, the thesis began with an examination of the problem (high rates of unemployment for persons with disabilities), described the results of the relevant research literature, and outlined the important contribution participants can make to the field of vocational rehabilitation. Subsequent chapters will examine existing literature, review the methodology utilized in this qualitative study, present the results obtained through participant interviews, and integrate the results of the research into the pre-existing literature base.

Chapter two, the literature review, begins with an examination of changes that occur as a result of spinal cord injury. I have chosen to include a brief synopsis of the physiology of spinal cord injury in order to allow the reader to understand levels of physical functioning as a result of spinal cord injury. Following this I look at research on coping with disability and how spinal cord injury affects career development. The literature review then turns to an examination of the historical role of persons with disabilities in the world of work. This section serves to provide a frame of reference to the struggle of obtaining competitive employment for persons with disabilities. As a result of the general exclusion of this group from the labour force attitudinal, physical, and procedural barriers have been erected. Each of these barriers is discussed in detail in the literature review. Finally, the last section of the literature review examines the measures that have been instituted to reverse the barriers to employment for persons with disabilities. This section includes a review of the Employment Equity Act (1986), vocational rehabilitation and awareness initiatives.

Chapter three of this study outlines the methodology utilized in the research process. I discuss the identification of potential bias as well as how the research question was formulated. A brief review of the qualitative approach illustrates the importance of the individual experience in addressing the re-entry to employment experience. I then provide a review of how participants were selected for the study and introduce the reader to these individuals. The interview process is explained, as is the analysis and presentation of the data.

Chapter four discusses the results of the study. Results are presented in table and narrative form in order to show the commonality of experiences of the participants while maintaining the individuality of all who contributed to the study. A model of the re-entry process is utilized to depict the data in pictorial form.

Chapter five concludes the thesis by relating participants' experiences to the existing literature in the area of vocational rehabilitation. This chapter also illustrates how the perspective of participants can be used by rehabilitation professionals who are assisting persons with spinal cord injuries to return to work. This study therefore attempts to bridge the gap between vocational services and the securement of employment for persons with disabilities.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Although the central focus of the study is the investigation of the employment experience following the onset of spinal cord injury, several areas that are interwoven in the topic provide a framework for understanding the lived experience. The onset of traumatic spinal cord injury is most often accompanied by changes in physical functioning, a psychological adjustment to the disability, as well as an interruption of one's vocational development. Each of these factors will be touched on in the literature review. The traditional role held by persons with disabilities in the world of work and a review of the barriers they have faced with entry into the work force presents a context within which to examine the accomplishments of those who have overcome them. The Employment Equity Act, the introduction of awareness initiatives and the provision for vocational rehabilitation are recent measures that have been instituted to remove barriers to employment for persons with disabilities. Each of these initiatives will be addressed in the literature review. An examination of the above areas served to provide a contextual framework for the individual experience of returning to the labour force following quadriplegic injury.

Life After Spinal Cord Injury

Following severe trauma to the spinal cord, the injured person often re-evaluates his/her situation from the perspective of living with a physical disability. Although this re-orientation can be all-encompassing, as suggested by Wright (1983), of particular importance in this study are those factors that influence a return to competitive employment. I have chosen to look at the physiology of cord injury, adjustment to disability and vocational development as important factors in the return to work process.

An examination of the physiology of spinal cord injury is essential to understanding levels of physical functioning and impairments that may challenge standard task acquisition in the work place. Literature on coping with physical disability will prepare the reader for the personal stories provided by participants. As is recognized in the existing literature, acknowledging the personal experiences of each individual promotes a greater understanding of the coping process. As well as a review of the physiology of spinal cord injury and the accommodation that occurs, it is apparent in the literature that the career development of injured persons is often interrupted. A model for career development as proposed by Navin and Myers (1983) holds promise in providing a perspective to the challenges faced by individuals who are re-entering the labour force after severe disability.

Physiology of spinal cord injury.

With regard to the pathology of spinal cord injury, Phillips, Ozer, Axelson and Chizek (1987) identify two factors that influence the outcome of the injury: level and completeness. "The level of injury is important because, in general, the higher the lesion, the greater the loss of function" (Phillips et al.,1987, p.13). Completeness of the injury plays a role in determining how much function will be maintained after the injury. "When injury is complete there is no measurable neurologic function at and below the level of the cord damage, and usually no movement or sensation below the level of injury. When injury is incomplete, some sensation or movement is retained below the level of injury " (Phillips et al., 1987, p.160).

Understanding the deficits that are typical of the various levels of trauma is important in the issue of employment as functional abilities change with level and completeness of the injury. For example, the difference between complete damage to the cervical area of the spine in comparison to the thoracic region is significant. Taking the extremes, an individual who has a lesion at the fourth cervical vertebrae (C4) may utilize highly sensitive technical aids in order to access his/her environment (Lee, Ostrander, Cochran & Shaw, 1991) due to the paralysis of both upper and lower extremities. Injury at the level of T1, however, rarely affects hand function. Therefore, independence within the physical environment is more likely due to the functional abilities of the upper body. Of particular significance to this study is the examination of the functional outcomes characterized by the onset of quadriplegia.

Quadriplegia "is defined as damage of neural elements within the cervical segments of the spinal canal" (Lee et al., 1991, p. 268). Categorization of individuals with an assault to the spinal cord or surrounding tissue at the cervical region is typically conducted by level. However, paralysis varies with degree of completeness of the injury. In order to understand the unique needs that may affect functional ability as it relates to employment, the following injury classifications are briefly examined; C1-C4 quadriplegia, C5 quadriplegia, C6 quadriplegia and C7-C8 quadriplegia.

Individuals who receive an injury at levels C1 thorough C4 are considered "high" level quadriplegics and may (if the injury is complete) require head controlled power mobility, sophisticated electronic equipment, and technical aids for completion of activities of daily living and employment (Lee et al., 1991). Initially breathing is severely affected and the use of respirator equipment is often required. The individual is physically dependent due to the paralysis of both the upper and lower extremities and therefore the work environment may have to accommodate technical devices such as environmental control units and robotic arms so that the person with the disability may adequately perform his/her work tasks (Phillips et al., 1987).

Persons with spinal cord lesions at the C5 level typically have functional deltoids and/or biceps (Lee et al., 1991). An orthotic device, such as a splint, allows for the propulsion of a power wheelchair with the hand as well as completion of tasks that involve writing and typing. However, physical dependence may remain for transfers, dressing, and personal hygiene (Phillips et al., 1987). Understanding the functional limitations that are concomitant to the cervical injury clarifies the many obstacles that are faced by the disabled person who is attempting to secure and maintain competitive employment.

An injury at the C-6 level usually manifest as paralysis of upper and lower limbs, however, activities of daily living are more easily achieved than for those individuals with higher level injuries. According to Phillips et al., (1987), "complete independence is achieved in eating, writing (although slower than usual), and driving" (p. 28).

Almost all people with injuries of the C7-C8 level "become completely independent in all functions consistent with living alone. Independent mobility is by wheelchair. For some people, however, personal hygiene may require partial physical assistance, transfers may require standby assistance; and dressing may require partial physical assistance" (Lee et al., 1991, p.25).

It is apparent from the above discussion of injury site that functional ability may present challenges in the search for employment, the way in which job-related tasks are completed, and the maintenance of long term competitive employment. Thus, this cursory review of spinal cord physiology brings context to understanding potential worksite issues identified by the informants of this study.

Coping with physical disability.

Psychosocial literature of recent years has turned to questioning the historically grounded stage theory of adjustment of physical disability. In a thorough review of pre-1970 studies, Trieschmann (1988) indicated that the stage theory of adjustment is unsubstantiated as "no data have been presented (in any of these articles) to demonstrate reliably and validly the existence, sequence, or duration of these stages" (p.69). The hypothesized stages to which Trieschmann (1988) referred are: denial, depression, dependency, hostility, and accommodation. Furthermore, several researchers (Trieschmann, 1988; Vash, 1981; Wright, 1983) have noted, in spite of earlier claims in the research on adjustment to disability, that depression is not apparent among most individuals with spinal cord injury (with the possible exception of during the acute treatment phase). Trieschmann (1988) added "actually, most people do very well with this (the physical reality of disability), since, in actuality they have very little choice" (p.291).

Although previous stage theory has been contested, current research appears to support the process of coping with spinal cord injury as a long term matter (Green, Pratt, & Grigsby, 1984; Mayer & Andrews, 1981; Trieschmann, 1988; Vash, 1981; Wright, 1983). Other points of agreement seem to be that one's identity is challenged as a result of the onset of physical disability, and variability of reaction to spinal cord injury occurs as a result of the unique situation of each individual (Mayer & Andrews, 1981; Trieschmann, 1988; Vash, 1981; Wright, 1983). Each of these facets of the coping process will be briefly reviewed below.

With regard to an alteration to one's identity, Trieschmann (1988) indicated that "the process of coping with the disability involves letting go of some 'I am's' and developing other ones about which the person can feel good" (p.291). This notion can be demonstrated through an examination of the value changes in acceptance of disability as proposed by Wright (1983) and in Mayer and Andrews' (1981) discussions of changes in self-concept. Consistent with the notion that identity is of central importance to self-concept (similar to Allport's discussion of personality) a distinction between self-concept and self-esteem seems important. As cited by Potkay and Allen (1986), Allport defined self-concept as "the individual's own perception of his or her personality" (p.494). They also pointed out that an essential aspect of self-concept is self-esteem. Self-esteem is "pride in one's pursuits and accomplishments" (Potkay & Allen 1986, p. 497). This distinction shows that self-concept and self-esteem are related and important in the discussion of coping with disability. It is probable that both self-esteem and self-concept will be challenged by the onset of spinal cord injury.

According to Wright (1983), individuals in the process of accepting physical limitations will reframe the disability as nondevaluating. This process entails an initial period of crisis where individuals utilize their resources to fight the physical and psychological assault that they have been dealt. Following the crisis phase, individuals with disabilities will engage in the process of value changes. Wright (1983) proposed that the individual will enlarge the scope of his/her values such that one appreciates "the existence of values in addition to the one(s) lost" (p.163). From this juncture, the individual with a physical disability will position other values above the physique that has changed as a result of the injury. For example, "physical appearance matters less than personality" (Wright, 1983, p. 171). Finally, value changes entail containing the effects of the disability. "Perceiving disability as an impaired tool helps to contain disability effects" (Wright, 1983, p. 176). This means that the individual is able to substitute an action or image of oneself for another. In essence, an identity change occurs.

Mayer and Andrews (1981) recognized the value changes proposed by Wright (1983) and relate the effects of spinal cord injury to an alteration of one's perception of the self. "It would seem that a person's life meaning could be radically altered by a spinal cord injury, and that an essential change in life meanings could strongly affect the individual's adjustment process and self-concept" (Mayer & Andrews, 1981, p.135).

Demonstrated through a qualitative form of enquiry, participants of the Mayer and Andrews (1981) study indicated positive, negative or no change in perceived life satisfaction at the onset of spinal cord injury. Extending perception of oneself to coping with disability, Mayer and Andrews (1981) proposed that self-concept may change according to the above life satisfaction states. They concluded that "the positive change group perceived their disability as a challenge or facilitator of personal growth, giving them the opportunity to re-examine their lives and to enhance their spirituality" (Mayer & Andrews, 1981, p.137). In contrast, the negative change group saw the disability as a "barrier that could not be overcome" and were unable to redefine their goals (Mayer & Andrews, 1981, p. 137). Interestingly, the no change group, as described by Mayer and Andrews (1981), perceived the disability as an obstacle requiring a refocusing of goals that had been established prior to injury. In other words, value changes may have occurred allowing for one quality to be substituted for another in the achievement of goals. Finally, Mayer and Andrews (1981) contend that the perception of disability as a facilitator, obstacle or barrier supports the notion that perceptions of disability are central to self concept.

In addition to changes in perception of self as described by Mayer and Andrews (1981), Vash (1981) indicated that reactions to disablement (an integral part of the coping process) are varied. She recognized four classes of reaction determiners; "a) those emanating from disability itself, b) those linked to the person who becomes disabled, c) those present in the person's immediate environment, and d) those that are part of the larger cultural context" (Vash, 1981, p.3). Trieschmann (1988) echoed Vash (1981) by saying "there will be a tremendous diversity of reaction to SCI because of the unique combination of psychosocial (P), biological-organic (O), and environmental (E) variables that each person represents " (p. 289). Therefore, coping with physical disability will vary according to the unique world in which the individual lives. This is why internal and external factors that impinge on the world of the person with a disability must be considered. As well, the ever-changing nature of psychosocial, organic, and environmental variables (Trieschmann, 1988) implies that coping with physical disability will entail a lifelong process.

Since employment is an activity in which individuals are expected to engage in adulthood, it is possible that coping with disability may be an integral aspect of the return to work process following severe spinal cord injury. Although the literature fails to provide us with a set of stages in the coping process, attention must be given to facets of one's life that might influence self-concept and ability to accommodate disability in everyday living. The current literature has stated that coping with disability is a varied and lifelong process.

Vocational development.

Several studies (Alfred, Fuhrer, & Rossi, 1987; Curnow, 1989; Goldberg & Freed, 1982) indicated that the onset of physical disability alters vocational development. All of the above researchers concurred that in some way the career planning and implementation process is arrested or retarded upon injury. As summarized by Alfred, Fuhrer, and Rossi (1987), "vocational development is disrupted at the time of severe spinal cord injury and plummets to a low level" (p. 856). Even two years after discharge from the hospital, vocational development is lower than before the injury (Alfred et al., 1987). According to Conte (1983), the newly acquired disability is disorganizing and the self-concept is dramatically challenged.

With attention to the notion of disrupted career development and altered self-concept, Navin and Myers (1983) reviewed vocational theories and their regard for the issues of persons with disabilities. The above researchers found that rehabilitants have been disproportionately placed in the secondary labour market and that prominent vocational theories do not specifically address the needs of this group (Navin & Myers, 1983). Hence, in terms of vocational rehabilitation "the application of each theory to disabled persons has been left to the discretion and interpretation of the individual counselor" (Navin & Myers, 1983, p.41). As a result, it is expected that counsellors in the area of vocational rehabilitation have been ill-equipped to deal with peripheral issues that may have a significant impact on vocational growth. Prior to discussing a lifespan model of career development proposed by Navin and Myers (1983), I provide the following background to their research.

In formulating a model of career development for persons with disabilities, Navin and Myers (1983) reviewed the historical roots of vocational guidance, two well known career development theories and incorporated the contributions of developmental psychology. Recognizing Parsons as the originator of the movement for vocational assistance in the United States, Navin and Myers (1983) acknowledged his contribution of "true reasoning" in the career development process. In review, Parsons identified an assessment of one's aptitudes and abilities as the first step in career development (as cited in Navin & Myers, 1983). This assessment is then followed by a review of several occupations. Parsons proposed that "true reasoning" occurs by connecting steps one and two in making a vocational choice (as cited in Navin & Myers, 1983). The career assessment which was based on reasoning became an integral part of the model proposed below.

In addition to the work of Parsons, Navin and Myers (1983) reviewed the trait and factor approach to career development as well as the theory of career typology. They concluded that although these approaches to career development provide limited assistance to persons with disabilities, they may not adequately reflect their needs. According to Navin and Myers (1983) the trait and factor theory has had a "practical application in the rehabilitation process" (p. 41) of adults with physical disabilities. By matching capabilities to job requirements, job restructuring and modification have been implemented (Navin & Myers, 1983). Holland's career typology can also be applied to persons with disabilities, according to Navin and Myers (1983). Here we see a matching of personality types to occupational environments. However, as the authors stated "no attention is given to potential personality change, or even disruption, following disability" (Navin & Myers, 1983, p. 41). As a result, they turn to Super's developmental theory of career exploration.

According to Navin and Myers (1983), Super addressed the issue of self concept in the development of one's career. They concluded that this approach acknowledges lifespan changes which may encompass an alteration in physical functioning. By reviewing previous career development theories, Navin and Myers (1983) presented their own model for occupational exploration and development encompassing Parsons notion of reasoning and Super's concept of a lifespan approach. Their model is characterized by four distinct phases that operate in a cyclical fashion.

The initial phase in career development as defined by this model is the understanding and acceptance of one's self. Since self-concept develops and is ever changing it is usually thoroughly examined at the onset of physical disability. Navin and Myers (1983) contend that the traumatic onset of disability in adulthood may require the individual to "revert to a former stage of development in order to reformulate a positive self-concept and a new self-acceptance" (p. 42).

Phase two involves career exploration and is affected by personality characteristics, available opportunity and socioeconomic status. At the onset of spinal cord injury "...the adult may be unable to engage in career exploration until satisfactory resolution of the preceding stage, self-acceptance, is achieved" (Navin & Myers, 1983, p.42). Consequently, recognition of coping with disability and redefinition of self are essential to the foundation of vocational development.

Phase three involves the identification with a career self-concept and selecting a vocation that matches one's abilities, personality and values (Navin & Myers, 1983). Although a position has been secured, the fourth stage in this model is the reevaluation of the chosen career. In keeping with a lifespan model, the ever changing self concept will lead to a continual reexamination of the employment situation. In this study I will attempt to examine the presence of this model of career development among the experiences of the participants.

In addition to spinal cord injury affecting personal factors such as levels of physical functioning, self concept and the development of one's vocation, external barriers may complicate the return to work process. Prior to discussing these barriers, I provide a review of the historical basis of the work ethic and the traditional role of persons with disabilities in the labour sphere in order to provide context to their current situation.

Disability and Work in Historical Context

In an attempt to understand the basis of prevailing attitudes associated with the employment of persons with disabilities, it is helpful to briefly review the historical basis of the work ethic and the traditional place held by this group in the labour force. This historical examination illustrates the oppressed position previously held by persons with disabilities in the work force and suggests that progress is being made.

The evolution of the meaning of work has differed through time and across societies (Schneider & Ferritor, 1982). Hunting and gathering societies placed a great deal of emphasis on the importance of kinship groups. As a result, the concept of work held little meaning as there was essentially no distinction between work activities and the chores of daily living. Schneider and Ferritor (1982) pointed out that "when illness, disability, or personality factors prevent persons from working, others increase their workload to sustain the group" (p. 28). Such cohesion served to strengthen kinship ties and further decrease the distinction of "work" within the community.

As societies developed more complex economies characterised by agricultural and pastoral systems, new methods of subsistence and social organization emerged. The division of labour evolved with an emphasis on social status and position within the community (Hagedorn, 1983). This differentiated social organization and development of "work" as a formal concept was further exemplified during the period of industrialization. During the early period of capitalism, the Protestant Ethic, as postulated by Weber (1947), defined a new doctrine that altered the importance of work in society. The Protestant Ethic described work as a central aspect of human existence (Schneider & Ferritor, 1982). Along with an ideological change, the expansion of mechanization and centralization of work (factories as a place of employment) were structural modifications that perpetuated the emergence of alternate familial roles in the process of production. Rather than the family labouring cooperatively in the kinship unit, the breadwinner provided economic security through outside employment. The factory environment discouraged participation of workers with disabilities by assuming that production needs could only be met by those who were able-bodied. Not only was the worksite inaccessible, the physical characteristics of persons with disabilities did not match the norm which inferred they were incapable of performing necessary job duties (Schneider & Ferritor, 1982).

Daniels(1981) distinguished between competitive and non-competitive employment, concepts which are valuable in this discussion. Competitive employment such as factory work, defines the worker by job characteristics and socio-economic status. In contrast, non-competitive employment entails "... functions essential to the fabric of society, culture, and economy performed daily without supervision and with no direct remuneration" (Daniels, 1981, p. 171). Persons with disabilities, if able to do so, have historically participated in non-competitive rather than competitive employment. In societies where productivity levels were high in comparison to the population, protection of persons with disabilities and decreased social participation (for example, non-competitive employment) was commonplace (Wright, 1983). Thus, with persons with disabilities exempt from typical adult social roles, they were perceived as "perpetual child, patient/invalid, curse or blessing from God" (Driedger & D'Aubin, 1991, p. 10) and consequently had little place in the world of work.

During the time between the two World Wars, persons with disabilities challenged the typical pattern of being excluded from competitive employment. However this advancement was relatively short lived. Spinal cord injuries (SCI) suffered by World War I veterans were severe with more than 80% of them ending in death following the first year of onset. However, the advent of sulpha drugs in the 1930's and antibiotics in the 1940's inspired paraplegics to "mobilize themselves out of bed, become personally independent and lead useful, economically rewarding lives" (C.P.A., 1990, p. 8). Thus, when able-bodied men were conscripted in World War II women and disabled members of society were able to enter vacated jobs and those created by the war (Vash, 1982). In spite of the establishment of the Canadian Paraplegic Association (under a Charter of the Dominion Government in 1945), whose mandate was to assist SCI veterans, advocacy for health services took precedence over employment. Hence, when these soldiers returned, "Rodney the Riveter", a disabled machinist was likely displaced to ensure employment for the able-bodied worker. Typically, this displaced segment of the community either returned to the secondary job market or joined the unemployed (Schneider & Ferritor, 1982; Vash, 1982).

With unemployment creating feelings of inadequacy at a personal level, a sense of powerlessness may ensue. Driedger and D'Aubin (1991) suggested that a self-fulfilling prophecy may emerge as a result of these feelings. The traditional exclusion of persons with disabilities from the means of production further magnifies this powerless stance with the individual experience being enacted at a societal level. Vash (1982) took a unique economic approach to this problem when she argued that:

> role stereotyping has proven to be a highly effective way of prescribing the labour market. It also serves to keep certain targeted groups in work roles that are considered undesirable by those who wish to occupy the prime labour market; keeping... minorities in needed but boring, low paying labour may be as valuable as keeping them out of the good jobs (p. 199).

However, the ever changing composition of the North American population (Krahn, 1991; Lindroth, 1982; McKay, 1991), and the increasing visibility of persons with disabilities, will undoubtedly foster consideration of non-traditional sources of labour by employers who require skilled workers.

In 1991, 15.5% of Canadians reported some level of disability (HALS, 1992). "The Health and Activity Limitation Survey uses the World Health Organization's definition of disability which is ... any restriction or lack (resulting from impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for human beings" (HALS, 1992, p. 2). Respondents to the HALS survey were asked questions regarding their daily living activities to determine the presence of a disability. Since their perception of disability is the tool for reporting, the survey recognizes the possible subjective bias of the data. In spite of this possible methodological difficulty, disability among Canadians seems increasingly more common. In part this growth in reported disabilities may be explained by the aging population. Moreover, attention is being focused on this group as the average Canadian foresees eventual membership among the disabled community. With a stronger voice, persons with disabilities will therefore challenge stereotypical roles in the process of accessing competitive employment.

Vash (1982), indicated that stereotyped roles and subservient behaviour that have been lived with for generations "become socio-culturally the natural order" (p. 199). With altered demographics, for example an aging population, the social construction of disability is changing. Subtle, yet important, nuances such as terminology indicate the spirit of this change. Using respectful and accurate vocabulary when referring to persons with disabilities is essential to full integration. Terms such as disability, physically challenged and differently-abled have replaced derogatory phrases such as the handicapped, crippled and insane. Thus, the stigma attached to the disability is being softened through a transformation in the social construction of the term. However, since stereotypes are often rigid, change among individuals and institutions will be gradual. I will now examine the longstanding attitudinal barriers that deter the employment of persons with disabilities. The analysis suggests that false convictions are historically grounded and indirectly perpetuate physical and procedural restraints within the workplace.

The Challenge of Barriers

Debilitation, inferiority, incapability, and general stigmatization are characteristics of the historical foundation of attitude formation regarding the attributes of persons with disabilities (Bolton, 1982). Such stereotypes in everyday life are transferred to the workplace and result in prejudice and discrimination. For example, when considering a worker with a disability for employment "the focus of the interview is often directed at the disability rather than the individual's capabilities" (Bergeron, 1992, p. 14). As is shown by current statistics, the unemployment rate for persons with disabilities is overwhelming and obtaining work is in part related to the untruths employers (and society in general) hold regarding the capabilities of this group.

Qualitative and quantitative studies (Bergeron, 1991; Goff Codon, 1987; Lester & Caudill, 1987; McCarthy, 1986; Parker & Hansen, 1981; Roth & Sugerman, 1984; Schweitzer & Deely, 1982; Thomas & Thomas, 1985) have reviewed the barriers to employment experienced by persons with disabilities indicating that attitudes permeate both the physical conditions of the work situation as well as the procedural regulations that guide the organization. According to Roth and Sugerman (1984), unnecessary repression results from the unknowing society that discriminates against workers with disabilities. To this end, the barriers to employment must initially be acknowledged.

Attitudinal barriers.

Attitudinal barriers have been categorized as myths, syndromes, and stereotypes that deter labour participation or relegate persons with disabilities into less than desirable occupations (Goff Condon, 1987; Lester & Caudill, 1987; Nathanson & Lambert, 1981). It is apparent that such barriers exhibit economic, situational (socially based) and/or affective underpinnings that motivate discriminatory hiring and promotion practices.

Economically based barriers are discussed by Lester and Caudill (1987) in a review of the myths of the worker with a disability. The most frequent reason given by employers for failing to recruit persons with disabilities is the misconception that they will demonstrate high rates of absenteeism and a lack of loyalty to the organization (Lester & Caudill, 1987). However, the United States Office of Vocational Rehabilitation estimates that 55% of disabled workers have better attendance records than non-disabled workers (reported in Lester & Caudill, 1987). This estimate is supported by Muklevicz and Bender (1988) who indicated that 39% of employers in their survey sample rated disabled employees as more punctual (with 40% rated as the same) than their able-bodied counterparts.

Many employers also incorrectly assume that workers with disabilities will jeopardize company safety records by engaging in unsafe work habits that facilitate additional injury (Lester & Caudill, 1987). Physical features of the worksite are the primary factors reflected in this assumption. Lester and Caudill (1987) reported that when they asked a paraplegic worker why managers perceive a safety risk in hiring persons with disabilities, the explanation given was that "mobility and safety are directly related. Further, non-handicapped people often cannot imagine how the handicapped worker is able to manoeuvre" (p. 51). An unsteady stride, perhaps a functional characteristic of a hemiplegic worker, while manoeuvring the job site is therefore perceived as a safety risk to the employer. This risk is assumed to be associated with a monetary loss as a result of inflated insurance premiums. However, "ninety percent of nearly 3,000 firms surveyed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers indicated no measurable effect on insurance premiums as a result of employing the disabled" (Lester & Caudill, 1987, p. 51). Accident records have also shown that 98% of employees with disabilities have better or similar accident records compared to their able-bodied counterparts (Muklevicz & Bender, 1988).

Another common myth is that productivity levels are reduced for persons with disabilities (Lester & Caudill, 1987; Schweitzer & Deely, 1982). This myth may be grounded in the relegation of persons with disabilities to the field of non-competitive employment. The participation in make-work projects (for example, rug-hooking) has historically removed this group from the mainstream economy. As a result, their role in the production process has been devalued. With few expectations for productivity and a lack of visibility in the workplace, persons with disabilities have traditionally been unable to demonstrate their job skills. However, those who have penetrated the barriers to the workplace generally maintain acceptable levels of productivity. In fact, Lester and

Caudill (1987) illustrated that approximately 25% of disabled workers have superior, and 66% have similar job performance records in comparison to non-disabled workers.

Johnson, Greenwood and Schriner (1988), through personal interviews with employers, found that productivity is the single most important factor attributed to successful employment. Since productivity is the fundamental basis of all business, physical limitations and their possible effect on performance (if any) can not be ignored. Job accommodation however should not be assumed to be a financial burden to the employer. In this regard, Schweitzer and Deely (1982) pointed out that "most disabled people will need no accommodation at all" (p. 208). For modifications or assistive devices to ensure efficient mastery of work related tasks, minor adaptations that provide accessibility at little cost (for example, a lever door handle or a mouth-stick for typing) may be employed.

Attitudinal barriers that are motivated by "bottom line" considerations are often cited as reasons for overlooking persons with disabilities for potential employment positions. Moreover, employers also hold socially construed stereotypes about the competency of workers with disabilities.

Schweitzer and Deely (1982) referred to paternalistic attitudes and social rejection as having a negative impact in the work environment. Given the traditional role that persons with disabilities have played (as indicated by Schneider & Ferritor, 1982), it is conceivable that they are perceived as helpless, dependent, and often segregated from the mainstream workforce. Nathanson and Lambert (1981) also outlined a series of syndromes that parallel the paternalistic attitudes and exclusionary behaviours described above. The 'don't worry, I'll protect you' syndrome, for example, assumes that the employee is defenceless and in need of assistance. In turn, employers may incorrectly conclude that a staff member with a disability will require additional attention from others (a capital loss may be incurred as a result). However, "the problem, in fact, may not be demanding employees but an intolerance on the part of a few employers" (Lester & Caudill, 1987, p. 51). Thus, false perceptions may result in behavioral outcomes that are discriminatory in nature.

Finally, Lester and Caudill (1987) contend that employers may perceive persons with disabilities as being an embarrassment to the organization. If employees with disabilities have high levels of productivity, attendance and punctuality, and are willing to work hard, as suggested by Muklevicz and Bender (1988), why would employers be uncomfortable with their presence in the workplace? Daniels (1981) explained this discrepancy with regard to the foundation of stereotypical attitudes. Because people with disabilities deviate from the norm (what society believes to be acceptable relates to physical normality with an emphasis on beauty), they are viewed as inadequate and unworthy of thorough integration.

Hence, social segregation rooted in preconceived notions of the role of persons with disabilities in society also ordains them to exclusion from the workplace. As was indicated earlier, the social construction of disability is changing. With an aging population and increased membership in this group, the stigma attached to disability is slowly being eroded. Along with this erosion, the integration of persons with disabilities into the workplace will continue to increase. Fundamental economic issues (such as a future labour shortage) may also force employers to view workers with disabilities as an asset rather than an embarrassment to the organization. Accordingly, social constraints regarding the employment of persons with disabilities may be altered as a result of the human resource needs of the organization and the composition of the potential labour force.

In addition to attitudinal barriers that are founded in perceived economic and social constraints, affective underpinnings may perpetuate such attitudes. Personal reaction to individuals with disabilities can be patronizing and in turn detract from a recognition of their abilities. Nathanson and Lambert (1981) stated that:

> no matter how well-trained, sensitive, well-meaning, or objective they may be, supervisory and managerial personnel, line-workers, and other professional and non-professional staff are not immune to holding biases, beliefs, or prejudices about persons who are disabled. These feelings and thoughts, deeply and often subconsciously rooted, are carried into daily interactions with disabled employees and can have a profound effect on their social and vocational integration into the business community (p. 110).

Unfortunately, latent barriers of ignorance and fear often accompany outer restraints that lead to prejudice and discrimination (Vash, 1982). Attitudinal barriers that prevent access to employment for persons with disabilities are difficult to permeate as they indirectly perpetuate physical and procedural restraints within the workplace.

Physical barriers.

Physical barriers typically inhibit entrance to, or productivity within, the workplace (McLoughlin, Garner & Callahan, 1987). The most obvious barrier of this kind entails accessibility. Stairs leading into the place of business, are problematic for those with a mobility impairment. Notwithstanding other requirements of the job, these individuals are immediately disadvantaged in gaining access to potential employment because of their physical disability.

For those who are able to access the building, the workplace may lack "appropriate washroom facilities and equipment that can be used by someone with a disability" (Agocs et al., 1992, p. 56). For example, the failure to accommodate the special needs of a worker who is visually impaired (for instance, the availability of a magnifier for reading) may lead to decreased productivity and erect barriers to career advancement. Given the physical barriers to worksite access and lack of reasonable accommodation, "disabled persons do not have employment opportunities that are equal to those of non-disabled persons" (Frank, Karst, & Boles, 1989, p. 6).

As well as reduced opportunity in the employment arena, education and training facilities that fail to consider accessibility and/or the need for assistive devices may deter the development of necessary job skills. In a review of the Employment Equity Act (1986), employers indicated that they "are not turning away qualified members to fill available positions. Witnesses stated that the gap between available skills and job requirements had grown in the general population, but particularly for members of the designated groups" (House of Commons, 1992, p. 31). Although this is not due solely to the physical barriers of the training site (for example, disabled individuals may not be eligible for vocational training support), access to upgrading is limited. Conversely, for those who attempt to develop career positions, training is typically done over an extended period of time because of the challenges presented by the learning environment. Thus, in either case the worker with a disability is disadvantaged in the marketplace.

Procedural barriers.

In addition to the attitudinal and physical barriers that prevent access to jobs for persons with disabilities, procedures that guide the organization often deter the participation of this group from competitive employment. "Procedural barriers are often more intractable to change than either attitudinal or physical barriers because they require the alteration of a system as opposed to a situational modification or individual change" (Daniels, 1981, p. 186). However, it is argued that attitudinal change of individuals within the structure is required for procedures of the organization to be altered. It is initially important to understand what procedures within the organization present barriers to employment.

Guidelines that regulate the operation of the organization often create barriers to employment for persons with disabilities.

> Work places are typically organized on the assumption that all employees are able-bodied, healthy, independent individuals who can work within a given time frame which suits the production needs of the workplace. Workers are expected to be flexible enough to cope with night shifts, overtime, and last minute changes to the working timetable (Agocs et al., 1992, p. 64).

For a worker with quadriplegia who requires assistance with personal care and utilizes specialized public transportation, such policies of the workplace are problematic. A job that requires shiftwork or last minute schedule changes may therefore not be an option for this individual.

Traditional job descriptions that specify the duties of the position do not often allow for the accommodation of differences as a means of providing equal employment opportunity to all candidates. If, for example, certain techniques are required to complete a task and a worker with a disability is unable to use that technique due to a functional limitation, accommodation may not be awarded. An organization's recruitment and selection practices can further limit opportunities for employment. "An assumption of disability rather than an assumption of ability can result in screening out persons with disabilities" (Agocs et al., 1992, p. 62). Therefore, prejudice and discrimination can be fostered through company policy and the values of the organization.

In addition to limiting the opportunity for employment, procedural barriers may stymie the career development of the worker with a disability. Promotion policies set up systematic barriers for this designated group "by failing to allow some flexibility" for personal care needs or assistance at the worksite (Agocs et al., 1992, p. 65). When promotion entails an increase in working hours or extensive travel to inaccessible work sites, qualified candidates with disabilities may be overlooked. Rather then employers attempting reasonable accommodation, stereotypes that designate persons with disabilities outside of the primary production process reappear.

At a procedural level, company policy is unknowingly biased as those who prescribe it hold values and attitudes that are prejudicial. Corporate representatives in positions of power can therefore perpetuate discrimination in employment by erecting attitudinal, physical and procedural barriers that serve to disadvantage workers with disabilities. Agocs et al., (1992) suggested that fundamental change that reflects the life experiences of persons with disabilities will promote the erosion of these barriers. If we simply encourage the designated group to change, persons with disabilities will continue to be forced into an organizational framework that has been constructed to echo white, male, able-bodied values and norms. Through the qualitative inquiry of this thesis, the experience of those who have obtained employment in spite of the existing attitudes and roles imposed by society is communicated. By understanding the experiences of pioneers who have had to deal with discrimination or indifference, professionals in the area of vocational rehabilitation may be better equipped to prepare rehabilitation clients and employers in the implementation of equal opportunity employment.

Measures to Reverse Unemployment for Persons with Disabilities

As stated earlier, the role of persons with disabilities in the workforce has historically been limited to positions outside of the primary labour market. However, demographics indicate that Canada's population is aging and persons with disabilities are challenging entrenched stereotypes that have previously excluded them from the breadwinner role. Economic necessity for skilled labour, an aging worker who is likely to experience disability, and the increasing visibility of persons with disabilities in society are factors that contribute to the importance of employment equity. In order for persons with disabilities to succeed economically in our community they must experience access to competitive employment and career development. "Neither will they be able to participate in decision - making or wield influence or power if they are not part of organizational life in Canadian Society" (Agocs et al., 1992, p. 11-12).

Although Canadians with disabilities have been excluded from the economic system, public policy, vocational rehabilitation and awareness initiatives have initiated change at an individual level, within organizations and in greater society. However, unemployment rates indicate that progress has been slow. Integration of persons with disabilities in the workplace has been stymied because these agents often fail to recognize or incorporate the experiences of this group. Each agent will be reviewed in an attempt to preface participants' experiences with these measures in the return to work process.

The Employment Equity Act.

Federal policy directed at overcoming discrimination and removing barriers that prevent equitable hiring has attempted to correct the disadvantage in employment for persons with disabilities. Bill C-62, an Act respecting equitable employment, purposes to "achieve equality in the workplace so that no person shall be denied employment opportunities or benefits for reasons unrelated to ability" (House of Commons, 1986, p.1). The Employment Equity Act (1986) applies to federally regulated employers and Crown corporations that employ in excess of one hundred workers. Organizations under the jurisdiction of the Act are regulated to plan strategically to employ a representative workforce and report their progress to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Employers who do not comply to reporting procedures can be fined. However, "there are no sanctions for failing to implement other provisions of the Act" (Agocs et al., 1992, p.3). For example, reasonable accommodation of differences, a provision of the Act essential to the integration of persons with disabilities, may not be attended to by the employer. Lip service may therefore be paid to the Employment Equity Act (1986) by filling positions with individuals who require minimal accommodation rather than with the most qualified applicant. To some degree this may explain the greater increase in participation of women in the labour force in comparison to persons with disabilities. Upon evaluation of the Employment Equity Act (1986) undertaken by a Review Committee in the House of Commons, other problem areas were identified.

In 1988 a review of the Employment Equity Act (1986) considered the feedback of government officials, employers and members of designated groups. The report of the Review Committee indicated that all witnesses recognized the need for increasing access to employment through strategic planning. However, differences emerged with regard to the nature and content of the plans (House of Commons, No. 19, 1992).

Employers indicated favour for the current legislative system that is free from quotas. This system allows for the development of hiring strategies geared to match the demands of their business. "In their view, because employment equity forms such an integral part of an organizations human resource and strategic planning process, the organization itself is in the best position to determine what form of employment equity program is required" (House of Commons, No. 18, 1992, p.11). Given that persons with disabilities have traditionally been excluded from positions with decision - making power, they may be excluded from this process. Organizational values that are biased in favour of white, able-bodied males will therefore be perpetuated rather than altered to encompass the worker with a disability.

The relegation of strategic planning for employment equity to a designated sector of the organization (for instance, the human resource department) also compartmentalizes the issue. Although it symbolically appears that top management are committed to the concept of employment equity, implementation may be carried out at a level removed from the top echelons of the organization. The risk here is that in an attempt to achieve a representative workforce, placement at any cost may be the result. For example, designated groups may be hired for temporary work or in positions of low pay as a means of enhancing the company's profile for a reporting period. During the review, employers also recognized that in certain occupations representation of designated groups is low. However, rather than proposing to increase overall participation it was suggested that efforts should be concentrated only where groups are under-represented (House of Commons, No.18, 1992). This band-aid approach is problematic as the token employee with a disability, who is hired for the targeted position, may be perceived as a recipient of pity and not as a qualified applicant. As well, the endurance of negative stereotypes may result in workers with disabilities being denied the opportunity to demonstrate their skills; in turn the organization inadvertently discourages career development. Keeping workers with disabilities in jobs of low pay with little visibility, also means they are unable to act as mentors for others who enter the system.

When stakeholder groups were asked for their feedback on the Employment Equity Act (1986), witnesses suggested that coverage be extended to encompass a wider range of employers. The current legislation governs Crown Corporations and 370 federally regulated employers. Although the Employment Equity Act (1986) has worked to increase opportunities for employment, its restricted scope may suppress the importance of issues such as discrimination and disadvantage. A greater coverage of the guidelines for equitable hiring will further increase the opportunities available to all designated groups. Should an expansion of the Employment Equity Act (1986) occur, it is expected to challenge existing attitudes regarding the role of person with disabilities in the economic structure of Canadian society.

In anticipation of expanded public policy, employers will possibly react with apprehension and resistance. They will likely demand information on the appropriate treatment of persons with disabilities, and request funding for architectural adaptations and assistive devices. All of the above measures at a cost to either the province/country or the independent organization. However, such expense may be reduced through awareness initiatives and the development of skilled workers with disabilities prior to the endorsement of an expanded Employment Equity Act. It is also recommended that such initiatives run parallel to the expansion of employment equity so that continuous development of workers with disabilities and debunking of myths may occur.

Vocational rehabilitation.

The provision of vocational rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities may better prepare this group for access to competitive employment. As reported by witnesses during the review of the Employment Equity Act (1986), skilled workers to fill targeted positions are not readily available (House of Commons, No. 18, 1992). In fact, the Health and Activity Limitation Survey (1986) indicated that 63% of Canadians with disabilities do not possess a high school diploma. It is no wonder that they "are placed in disproportionate numbers in the secondary labour market, in readily available, entry level, unskilled, low paying positions" (Navin & Myers, 1983, p.39).

Upgrading basic skills and retraining in a marketable occupation may reverse both education and employment trends for persons with disabilities. As suggested by Curnow (1989), vocational rehabilitation counsellors must assist "clients to cope with their feelings and attitudes about their disability and to bring about an understanding of their strengths and limitations" (p. 275). Through this process, the individual is able to establish realistic goals that can reverse patterns of impaired career development (Alfred et al., 1987). With trained job candidates, vocational counsellors would also be better equipped to promote the hiring of persons with disabilities to interested organizations. Individuals would benefit as well. Not only would they be eligible for a broader spectrum of opportunities, confidence in their skills would come through in spite of the presence of a disability. From an employer's perspective, the opportunity to hire a qualified worker may override the challenges that are presented by the disability. With confidence that the candidate is a skilled worker who is likely to maintain a high level of productivity (Lester & Caudill, 1987), the employer may absorb the costs of architectural modifications knowing that the balance is tipped in the organization's favour. Thus, a focus on ability rather than disability occurs.

With the development of skill on the part of the worker with a disability, the assistance of a vocational counsellor, and the interest of a potential employer, movement toward accessing competitive employment may be achieved. In isolation this recommendation may seem naive. However, when vocational rehabilitation is supplemented with public policy such as the Employment Equity Act (1986) such results are more realistic. Highly skilled workers with disabilities available during a labour shortage can be brought into the labour force through the Employment Equity Act (1986). With marketable skills, persons with disabilities are more qualified for competitive employment and the Employment Equity Act (1986) may provide an opportunity to establish a career.

The marriage of vocational rehabilitation to public policy, for the purpose of developing a representative workforce, is problematic in that it regards the "world of work as a natural order and tries to adjust the disabled person to that world" (Roth & Sugerman, 1984, p. 366). Programs such as these are often designed without understanding the experience of persons with disabilities. Thus, imposing policy in this way may further engender feelings of "powerlessness, anger, and discrimination" (Roth & Sugerman, 1984, p. 368). Stereotypical attitudes may be reinforced rather than dispersed as company executives and counsellors for persons with disabilities interpret their role as a nurturing one. In order to remove this bias, awareness initiatives and public education should parallel vocational rehabilitation, individual growth and development and employment equity. Barriers to employment could be curtailed through such measures.

Awareness initiatives.

With access to professional services that provide vocational assistance and support with the adjustment process, persons with disabilities can upgrade their skills and compete more fairly in the labour force. Employment equity legislation provides the designated group an opportunity for employment by minimizing discrimination and disadvantage. However, in spite of the positive intentions supporting these measures, "disabled people trying to crack the job market still encounter intolerance, ignorance and rejection" (Galt, 1993, p. 1). Images that define persons with disabilities as debilitated, inferior and incapable will continue to prevent full integration of this group in the primary labour market. Public education that parallels the provision of vocational rehabilitation and employment equity legislation can initiate attitude change.

As a precursor to a brief review of awareness initiatives that currently operate in Canadian society, it is important to note that dissemination of information, in the private and public community, is only a commodity if it is of value to the intended audience (McCarthy, 1982). For example, when marketing the benefits of the Employment Equity Act (1986) to a new audience of employers the 'bottom line' financial benefits rather than solely the benefits to the disabled population should be stressed. If prospective employers realize that persons with disabilities maintain high levels of productivity, have better attendance records than their able-bodied counterparts, and are loyal employees (Lester & Caudill, 1987), they are likely to consider the economic advantages of employing this designated group. This is why it is so essential that the experiences of persons with disabilities be acknowledged.

The available literature suggests that it is also necessary to establish a network through which information is disseminated. This will reduce the likelihood that stereotypical attitudes and values will block the flow of information to all levels of the organization. "By facilitating this function, networks heighten the impact and relevance of information and the probability that innovations (which represent the applications of new knowledge) will be adopted" (McCarthy, 1982, p. 124). Attitude change strategies must include information dissemination that indicates equality between the disabled and non-disabled population, as well as provide contact with the designated group. "It appears that it is not contact or information alone but contact between able-bodied and disabled people when both are of equal status, and the combination of information about disability and contact with disabled people that are the most powerful change strategies" (Daniels, 1981, p. 160). Integration of children with disabilities into the education system is an example of how equality can be attempted while raising awareness and acceptance of those who challenge existing norms.

At the level of the organization, awareness training can be implemented to dispel the attitudinal barriers that prevent access to employment. The Canadian Rehabilitation Council for the Disabled (CRCD) has formulated a sensitivity awareness training program that attempts to address this issue. The CRCD orients employers to the appropriate treatment of persons with disabilities so that they are seen as equals in the employment process (Nobel, 1989). For example, awareness of the negative effects of patronization or the use of demeaning language may alter the negative attitudes that currently permeate the workplace.

In addition to structured programs that are facilitated by organizations such as the CRCD, advocacy groups and human resource departments run campaigns that promote employment based on skill rather than unemployment on disability. When the use of such measures increases the opportunity for employment for persons with disabilities by altering long standing stereotypes, they will no longer be required. However, in 1993 Canada urgently requires public policy and awareness initiatives.

The preceding literature review has covered internal and external factors which influence the experience of returning to gainful employment for the participants of this study. Physical impairment is determined by both the level and completeness of the spinal cord injury. Since loss of function occurs in the lower and upper extremities (in varying degrees) for quadriplegia, specific work tasks or the employment position may require modification to accommodate the physical disability. Onset of spinal cord injury also requires an adjustment to living one's life with a physical disability. In review, the research showed that coping with disability is an ongoing process that varies for each individual due to the complexity of the individual and his/her environment. The onset of physical disability also influences the career development of the injured person. Navin and Myers (1983) model of career development was presented in anticipation that the participants of this enquiry might describe a similar process.

In order to link the effects of spinal cord injury at a personal level to external influences that deter access to the workforce, I provided a brief historical review of the position traditionally held by persons with disabilities in the world of work. This brought context to the increasing participation of persons with disabilities in the workforce and their previous exclusion from it.

External factors that typically discourage full labour participation for persons with disabilities were then examined. Attitudinal, physical and procedural barriers continue to be problematic for full integration in spite of the fact that many of these barriers are grounded in myth.

Finally, the literature review included a look at the Employment Equity Act, the provision of vocational rehabilitation for persons with disabilities and the introduction of awareness programs. All of these measures have been undertaken to reverse the exclusion of persons with disabilities from the mainstream employment sector of Canadian society. Unemployment among this group however, still remains high. I reiterate my view that this discrepancy is in part due to such measures failing to acknowledge the experiences of persons with disabilities.

The following study attempted to describe the unique experiences of those who have re-entered the workforce following quadriplegic injury. The research recognizes the individual experience and identifies commonalities among participants. Knowledge of the unique experiences and characteristics of this group of people might better prepare rehabilitation practitioners to assist persons with disabilities who desire employment and be used to educate employers who require skilled workers.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The following section of the thesis provides a review of the qualitative methodology utilized to obtain first hand information of the lived experience of re-entering the workforce following the onset of spinal cord injury. Factors such as the selection of research participants, the logistics of the interview process, and the synthesis and presentation of the data are outlined. Biases brought to the research topic and the rationale for question formulation are also discussed. A brief review of the qualitative paradigm provides a guide for the methodology and philosophy of this study.

Identification of Potential Bias and Question Formulation

An examination of the experience of re-entering the labour force following the onset of traumatic injury is a logical research topic given my interest in the management of human resources and the significance of employment in the life sphere. Having counselled individuals with spinal cord injury with regard to environmental modifications, education, career planning and adjustment to disability, I have become aware of the many issues that confront this population. More specifically, through the work relationship with my colleagues (of whom many were disabled) and clients, I have become aware of the presenting challenges of the return to work process.

With the introduction of Employment Equity and the Federal Contractors Program, an altered perspective about the role of persons with disabilities in the labour force has emerged. Having had clients obtain gainful employment through an equity program, I have come to question some employers' motivation of hiring practices utilized via this system. Rather than job placement being determined by education and experience alone, in some cases recruitment is driven by the guidelines set forth in the Employment Equity Act (1986). Hiring to meet standards that raise statistics instead of the recruitment of qualified personnel is only a temporary solution. For example, Galt (1993) noted that "deaf and blind people, hired under employment equity programs, complain that they find themselves parked in dead-end jobs" (p. A5). Hence, a ghetto of persons with disabilities in low paying positions may be the result. Navin and Myers (1983) might also recognize the potential for such ghettoization as they indicate that since placement is often the only measurable outcome of success by human resource professionals, job maintenance is often ignored. The opportunity for career development in a competitive environment is reduced as attention may be focused on placement numbers and not on persons with disabilities as valued employees.

With regard to the difficulties inherent to the re-entry process, as a counsellor I have provided support and guidance in career planning. However, in my experience, vocational rehabilitation often focuses too heavily on job placement. The result is the failure to recognize each individual's unique human experience of entering the work force following the onset of physical disability. Although not intentionally, the vocational counsellor may attempt to pigeon hole the client into an employment position rather than altering the work duties to accommodate the individual. Roth and Sugerman (1984) suggested that it is the social and physical world that must adjust rather than the person with a disability. Agocs et al., (1992) supported this view when they contended that true equality in employment will not occur if we "simply force the designated groups to change, not the organizations" (p. 12). I concur with Agocs et al., (1992), and agree to a certain extent with Roth and Sugerman (1984). The social and physical world must accommodate persons with disabilities but this group must also show responsibility for the development of skills so that they are competitive in the employment arena. Although it is not within the scope of this project to thoroughly examine what dictates our actions toward persons with disabilities, listening to the participants stories may provide insight into the meaning and experience of the re-entry to employment process.

This study is particularly significant in my role as a vocational counsellor. In my work I have been confronted by clients who insist that I cannot understand their experience of physical disability. Initially I interpreted this remark as a personal assault on my ability to offer adequate service to the client. However, over time and with greater compassion, I have come to realize that each person's experience is unique. I may not be able to understand what it is like to live with a physical disability as I do not have one. But understanding the employment experience is more familiar, as the activity of employment is one which most adults strive to obtain. By listening to the participants' dialogue I immersed myself in the narration of their employment experiences that seemed to be magnified by the physical disability. In doing so I gained a greater understanding of their experiences. Such information can be shared with other vocational counsellors and they will be better equipped to assist newly spinal cord injured clients who are embarking on the re-entry to employment process.

The research question evolved out of conversations that I have had with adults with physical disabilities who are either in the process of gaining full-time employment or who are currently employed. If the experience of re-entering the work force can be communicated to human resource professionals and vocational rehabilitation consultants, perhaps the service provided to persons with disabilities can more accurately reflect their needs.

The Qualitative Approach

For the investigation of the employment experience following the onset of physical disability, a qualitative form of enquiry was used. This allowed for a discovery of the nature and meaning of the phenomenon from the "frame of reference of the experiencing person" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 39). This enquiry began with an interest in the issue of the employment of persons with disabilities by exploring the meaning of the unique experience through open-ended questioning. It is proposed that:

> only the experiencing persons - by looking at their own experiences in perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and sense - can validly provide portrayals of the experience. If one is to know and understand another's experience, one must converse directly with the person. One must encourage others to express, explore, and explicate the meanings that are within his or her experience (Moustakas, 1990, p. 26).

Similar to the heuristic paradigm as described by Moustakas (1990), as a researcher I passed through the formulation of the research topic (engagement), immersed myself in the issues taken from the data and then removed myself from the data. This allowed for clarification (or illumination) of my understanding of the interview material. Next I gained an intense awareness of the impact of the experience through the explication and synthesis of the data. Themes representative of the interview dialogue were validated by participants to ensure that their experiences had been accurately expressed. The above qualitative approach portrays the re-entry to employment experience in a descriptive manner in narrative form.

Selection of Research Participants

A purposeful sampling process was utilized to select the participants for this study. The strength of this selection method rests in the ability to choose information-rich cases which enhance the examination of the research question (Patton, 1990). Of the many purposeful sampling formats described by Patton (1990), I decided to use both maximum variation and criterion sampling strategies.

Maximum variation sampling entails selecting participants who vary on the dimensions of interest (Patton, 1990). In this study, I selected informants with varying educational backgrounds, from diverse pre-injury occupations who had returned to a range of positions in the workforce following spinal cord injury. Table 1: Participant Characteristics, illustrates the variation among participants as a result of the employment of the maximum variation strategy. Since the participants were heterogenous, credibility would be heightened if a common pattern in the experience of employment following spinal cord injury emerged.

Table 1

Participant Characteristics

	Details of SCI				Education		Employment			
							Pre-Injury Employment		Current Employment	
Participant	Age	Year of Onset	Cause of SCI	Level of Lesion	Pre-Injury Level	Post-Injury Development	Type	Hours/ Week	Type	Hours /Week
Ron	48	1965 (28 years)	Motor Vehicle Accident	C5-6 Complete	Part of Grade 12	•Grade 12 •Bachelor of Arts	•Tradesman in the field	40	•Social Service Professional	40
Fred	36	1980 (13 years)	Diving Accident	C5-6 Complete	Bachelor of Science (General)	•Bachelor of Science (computer) •Computer training through community institutions	•Apprentice Chef •Labourer •Orderly	40 40 Part-time	•Computer Programming Professional	40
Wayne	34	1978 (15 years)	Farm Accident	C5-6 Incomplete	Grade 12	•Agriculture training	•Farmer •Store Manager	40+ 40	•Social Service Professional •Farmer	30-40 30
Joseph	33	1977 (16 years)	Ski-doo Accident	C7-8 Complete	Grade 7	•Grade 12 •Electronic technicians training •Employment readiness training	•Labourer	40+	•Data Entry Clerk	40
Jordan	39	1987 (6 years)	Diving Accident	C6-7 Complete	•Bachelor of Science •Course work in graduate studies	•Courses toward CMA at community college •Management courses •Computer training	•Bartender •Sales •Contracting	8 30+ 30+	•Social Service Professional	45-50
Michael	32	1977 (16 years)	Motor Vehicle Accident	C5-6 Complete	Part of Grade 10	•Grade 12 •Business and computer training at community college	•Student		•Program Manager	35

As well as maximum variation, I utilized the strategy of criterion sampling when choosing study participants. As mentioned previously, participants were to meet the following criteria to be considered for the study. Potential participants must; a) experience paralysis of upper and lower extremities (typical of quadriplegia) and utilize either a manual or electric wheelchair for mobility, b) have had a pre- injury employment history, and c) currently engage in employment activities for 30 to 40 hours per week in exchange for competitive financial remuneration. By meeting these predetermined criteria I anticipated obtaining a sample of participants who could address the issues presented in the interview process because they would have experienced re-entry to employment following spinal cord injury. As Patton (1990) would say "quality assurance" is achieved by using the strategy of criterion sampling.

With purposeful sampling as a guide to participant selection, I utilized the membership list of the Canadian Paraplegic Association-Alberta Division (CPA) to locate potential informants. Consent to access this information was granted by the CPA (see Appendix A). Having had previous exposure to many members of CPA, I selected ten potential candidates who appeared to meet the criteria I required of all participants. All of the individuals were contacted by telephone at which time they were informed of the purpose of the research. I also confirmed the employment status of each potential informant as I found that in some cases the information received was not the same as that listed on the CPA's data base. Four of the original ten participants were excluded from the study; three because they did not meet the criteria for full-time employment and one because he was anticipating a relocation outside of Alberta. As a result, six participants were chosen. I will now introduce you to each individual who participated.

Jordan.

Jordan was injured in a diving accident six years ago at the age of thirty four. As a result of damage to the sixth and seventh cervical vertebrae he is paralyzed from his midsection down with limited hand and arm function. He utilizes a manual wheelchair for mobility.

With a Bachelor of Science and some course work at the graduate level, Jordan worked at several jobs during his university years and prior to his accident. An employment history which includes bartending, contracting and sales illustrates his diverse skill base. Work ethic is also shown, as Jordan was often employed at more than one job at a time while attending university.

Following sixteen months in a rehabilitation centre, Jordan embarked on re-entering the work force. In his first post-injury employment experience, he described his job as giving him "purpose to do something with life" (JD: 155). Having held four positions in the last six years, Jordan currently works as a social service professional within a government department. A statement that best portrays Jordan is his desire to be "as close to a normal guy as I can be" (JD: 728). If masculinity and a straight forward approach represent normality, then I surmise that Jordan has fulfilled this desire.

Joseph.

Joseph sustained a spinal cord injury at the C 7-8 levels with the resulting disability being comprised of complete paralysis of the lower extremities and residual paralysis of his upper extremities. Joseph was residing in a northern community when he was injured in a ski-doo accident. Joseph is thirty three years old and has lived with a physical disability for sixteen years.

Working as a labourer prior to his accident, Joseph states his current employment position is "not grunt work anymore, it's brain work" (J: 166). Perhaps Joseph's post-injury development can clarify this description of his work.

Prior to his spinal cord injury Joseph had completed grade seven. Following a period of adjustment (five to six years), friends encouraged Joseph to upgrade his education (J: 877-878, 383). Joseph went on to obtain his grade twelve equivalency in Alberta as well as participating in an electronics technician training course. Furthermore, he attended an employment preparation program offered through a community college. With an advanced level of education, Joseph is currently employed as a data entry clerk with a non-profit organization.

In attempting to identify Joseph through his own expressions, I realized his words are few but so meaningful. When I asked him to provide an example of advice that he might give to a peer re-entering the work force, he replied "I don't think I'm in a position to do that" (J: 779). I believe this truly reflects the humble nature of this man.

Michael.

Michael is a thirty two year old man who was injured in a motor vehicle accident when he was fifteen years old. With a complete injury at the C 5-6 level, Michael uses an electric wheelchair for mobility.

At the time of his injury, Michael was attending high school in rural Alberta with a long-term goal of working as a mechanic. With a quadriplegic injury, he realized that he would have to re-evaluate his chosen career (M: 47-48). While undergoing several years of physical rehabilitation in an urban hospital, Michael finished his high school and went on to college.

With diplomas in business administration and microcomputer management, Michael has been employed since his graduation from community college. He is currently a professional manager who is well respected among agencies who provide services to persons with disabilities. An important phrase that captures Michael's approach to his disability and life in general is "people are people" (M: 750).

Wayne.

Wayne was injured in 1978 (at the age of 19) when a half-ton truck pinned him to the ground when the jack slipped. As the result of this accident, Wayne sustained damage to his spinal cord at the C 5-6 level and relies on a manual wheelchair for mobility.

With his residence in a rural area prior to the spinal cord injury, Wayne worked on a farm and also managed a grocery store in the nearby town. Having just completed high school, and having grown up on a fourth generation farm, Wayne had planned to continue farming (W: 178).

Although the onset of his disability prompted Wayne to reconsider his career choice, management of the farm was determined to be a feasible alternative. In addition to his continued participation in farm life, Wayne holds a full time job as a social service professional in an urban centre. A statement that I think accurately reflects Wayne's love of farming and determination is; "if you want something bad enough, you can do it. So that's all there is to it" (W: 590-591).

Ron.

Ron is a forty eight year old man who at the time of his motor vehicle accident also lived in rural Alberta. Having sustained injuries at the C 5-6 level of the spinal cord, Ron described his injury as complete. Ron utilizes an electric wheelchair for mobility. He has been physically disabled for twenty eight years.

Prior to his motor vehicle accident, Ron worked as a gas operator for an oil company. Ron indicated that with a physical disability he was unable to return to his occupation (R: 40-43), and decided to upgrade his education. This required that he relocate to the city as post-secondary education was not an option in the rural community in which Ron had lived.

After upgrading his partial grade twelve education, Ron completed a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Alberta. Lack of special transportation for persons with disabilities and environmental barriers were especially challenging in his pursuit of education and employment. A reflection of the times (early 1970's), these barriers indicated the general lack of awareness of the needs of persons with disabilities. In spite of such barriers, Ron established a career as a social service professional. Ron's confidence, a quality inherent to his success, is captured in the following sentences "...number one, you have to start setting goals and two, you have to start believing you have the capability of doing it. Because when you don't believe in yourself it's hard to get somebody else to believe in you" (R: 1359-1364).

Fred.

Last, but certainly not least, Fred is a friend who inspired me to do this study. Following intense conversations with Fred, I realized that the employment experiences of persons with spinal cord injuries must be told.

At the age of twenty three, Fred received injuries to the fifth and sixth cervical vertebrae when he dove into shallow water. Concomitant with the quadriplegic injury, Fred uses an electric wheelchair because of partial paralysis of his upper and complete paralysis of his lower extremities.

At the time of the diving accident Fred was working as an apprentice chef. In conjunction with this practical experience, Fred was attending a technical school where he studied the procedures of food preparation and management. Prior to his attendance at this technical school, Fred had completed a Bachelor of Science in preparation for a long term goal to practice medicine.

When Fred realized that he would be unable to work as a chef because of limited hand function (F: 45-56), he returned to University where he completed a specialization certificate in computer science. Fred is now employed as a computer programming specialist with a large institution.

I have chosen a statement made by Fred that I believe reflects his inner strength in coping with his disability. "If you're not determined to keep going and fight the obstacles then you're not going to do it, so you have to be determined. Sometimes it's awfully hard to keep up that fight" (F: 285-288).

Once the participants had been selected for the study, each individual was mailed an information package on the thesis research. Enclosed in this package was a set of instructions that outlined the specifics of the study (see Appendix B), a participation release agreement (see Appendix C) on which participants consented to their involvement and an interview schedule (see Appendix D) that outlined the details of the initial informant-researcher meeting. The participants were asked to complete a participant information form (see Appendix D) and bring it to the initial interview along with the signed consent form. All eligible participants who were initially contacted by the researcher agreed to contribute to the study by sharing their re-entry to employment experiences.

In summary, a purposeful sample comprised of six participants were selected for this study. Education and employment type prior to injury varied showing that all informants upgraded their educational levels post-injury. Prior to injury education levels of these individuals ranged from completion of grade seven to the involvement in graduate level education. Although the study initially proposed to exclude those without employment history pre-injury, I decided to include Michael in the research for comparison purposes. The analysis of Michael's experience was utilized to examine whether commonalities existed between his experience and that of other participants.

Logistics of the Interview Process

The process of the in-depth interview utilized in this study resembled the methodology outlined by Moustakas (1990) in his discussion of heuristic research practices. The heuristic perspective typically entails a discovery of the nature and meaning of the phenomenon (in this case, the employment experience) from the "frame of reference of the experiencing person" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 39). This process of enquiry begins with an interest in a question or problem. It attempts to portray the meaning of the unique human experience through exploratory open-ended questions that allow for dialogue and expression of the issue under investigation (Moustakas, 1990).

Upon selection of research participants for the study the interview process began. After thanking the informant for his participation, a brief review of the details of the study was presented. I communicated the research goal of attempting to better understand the post-injury employment experience of males who, as a result of spinal cord injury, are functionally quadriplegic. In order to empower the informants to express the essence of the experience, open-ended questions were utilized in the interview. In a further attempt to gain a clear portrayal of the process of re-entry into the labour force, an interview guide (see Appendix F) provided a frame of reference during the session. However, the informant was given the freedom to guide the interview as it was essential that he emphasize those factors in the experience that were personally relevant.

Each participant was required to commit approximately four hours to the data collection process. I conducted an initial interview (of approximately one hour) at a location of convenience to the informant. In some cases the interview took place in the home or place of employment of the participant and in other cases in a quiet restaurant over dinner. For those who chose to be interviewed at home or work, I provided a meal to ensure that all participants were equally treated. Each interview was audiotaped, lasting between thirty minutes and three hours. Since participants were given the latitude of discussing their experiences in varying dimensions, I allowed them to place parameters on interview time. Each informant chose a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality and all identifying features (such as place of employment and names of coworkers) were altered so as to conceal the identity of the participants in this small population. The interviews were then transcribed verbatim in narrative form.

An intermediary session allowed the participants to review the transcribed interview. At this time they were allowed to alter or remove excerpts from the manuscript, as well as validate the data. Each informant was given approximately one week to review the document and met briefly with the researcher to express any changes that were required. Grammatical corrections comprised the majority of modifications made by the thesis participants.

Once the transcribed interview had been validated by each participant, the researcher analyzed and synthesized the data (the process of which is discussed in the next section). Upon completion of data analysis, follow-up interviews were conducted with each participant. At this time participants were informed of the results of the study from the perspective of the researcher. Informants were asked to express their agreement or disagreement with the profile presented by the researcher. Similarities and differences of all participants' experience of employment after spinal cord injury were reviewed with each informant. Such a process allowed for triangulation of the data. Each of these interviews varied in length; the shortest being ten minutes and the longest forty-five minutes. Upon conclusion of this interview, participants were informed that their involvement in the research process was now complete. Informants were once again thanked for their interest and participation in the study.

In addition to the audiotaped and transcribed version of each interview, a personal journal containing the reflections of the research process was kept by the interviewer (see Appendix G for an example). This document captured the reactions of the researcher as well as insights that contributed to the analysis of the research data.

Analysis, Synthesis and Presentation of the Data

The interview material was analyzed in a three part process. Upon completion of the initial interview and validation by the informant, the preliminary phase of analysis began. The extraction of meaning units, paraphrasing of those units, synthesizing (or breaking it down further) and tagging the units of information (with an appropriate code that accurately reflects the initial meaning) was undertaken (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This required several copies of the transcript as a single meaning unit was on occasion, assigned more than one tag. The following is an example of this initial analysis process. Meaning unit: "My self-confidence issue impacts the whole employment thing and my life" (F: 589-590). Paraphrase: self-confidence impacts employment and life. Synthesis: self-confidence impacts employment. Tag: self-confidence in employment, self- confidence in life.

In keeping with qualitative methodology as outlined by Moustakas (1990), a period of incubation comprised the intermediate phase in the analysis process. I removed myself from the data for a period of several weeks. During this time period I refrained from reviewing the transcripts. This allowed for the contemplation of the meaning of the employment experience for each participant. Reflections were recorded in a personal diary and served to guide the final analysis process. This is similar to illumination as described by Moustakas (1990). Through the process of reflecting on interview transcripts I had an intense awareness of the impact of each participant's re-entry to employment experience. Following this illumination, I began to synthesize the data such that each meaning unit was accurately represented by themes (Moustakas, 1990). The synthesis step occurred as follows.

The final phase in the analysis involved the construction of themes based on the amalgamation of the data from all research participants. A variety of themes emerged from the data. Clarification and validation of these themes was achieved in the follow-up interviews with each participant. During the follow-up session, I reviewed the thematic analysis with each informant. Participants were asked for their feedback on the analysis of their interview as well as on the interpretation of common facets of all participants' experience of employment following the onset of spinal cord injury. All participants were encouraged to critique the analysis to ensure that what is presented in the following pages is an accurate reflection of the re-entry to employment experience. Misinterpreted data was reassessed to ensure the informant was understood. In turn, the participative nature of the analysis process enriched the quality and substance of the dialogue obtained from participant interviews.

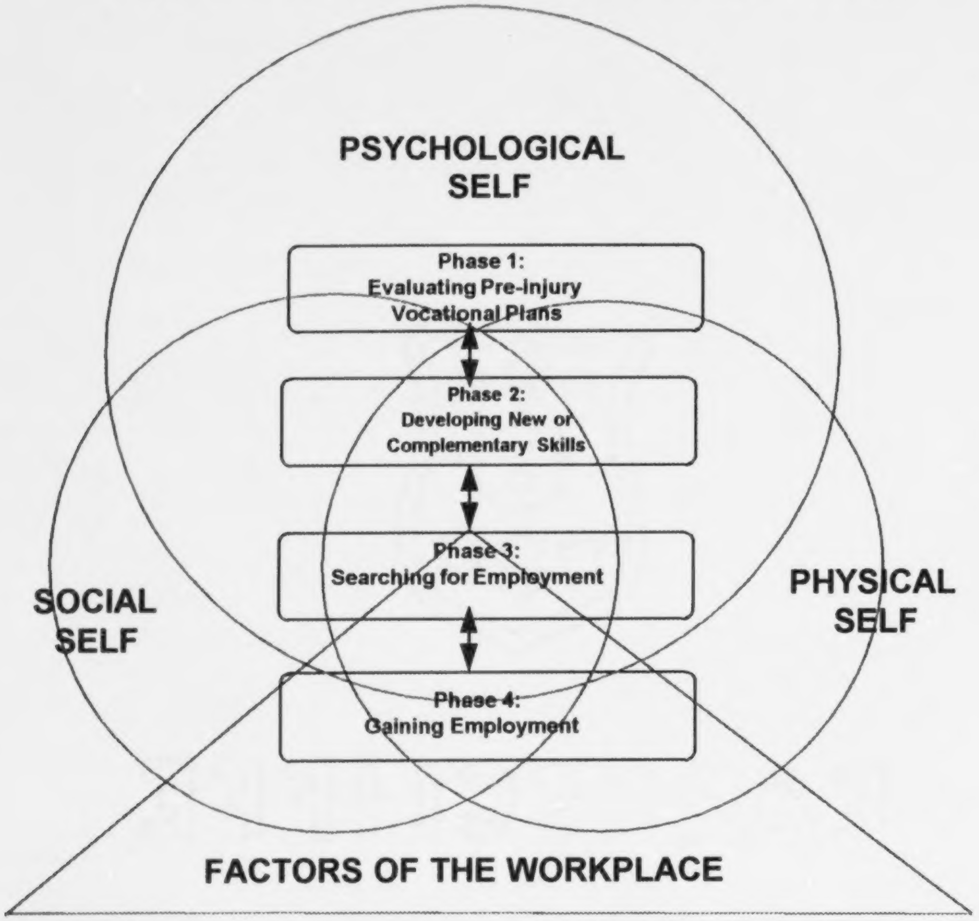
Chapter Four: Results

This chapter examines the experience of re-entry to employment as a process that entails evaluating pre-injury vocational plans, developing new or complimentary skills, searching for employment and gaining employment. The process of re-entering the labour force appears to be influenced by the physical, social and psychological components of the self. In this regard, it is apparent in this study that participants evaluated the self concept as it was challenged by the impingement of physical disability. The challenges imposed by physical limitations, reassessment of the self, and the social supports available to the individual seem to be significant factors in the re-entry to employment process.

Factors of the workplace also appear to affect and contribute to successful access to the labour force for the participants of this study. In particular, informants mentioned the prevalence of temporary employment, the need for a flexible work schedule, the availability of aides and worksite modifications, the necessity for a focus on ability and the presence of other persons with disabilities in the workplace. Through an examination of the process engaged in by the participants in their search for and return to employment, the data suggests that a profile of personal attributes can be extracted.

The following model (Figure 1) provides a pictorial representation of the re-entry to employment process. The model was developed following the analysis of the data, but is presented here in order to demonstrate to the reader that the re-entry process is a dynamic one which encompasses components of the self and factors of the workplace.

Figure 1: The Employment Re-entry Process


PSYCHOLOGICAL SELF
Phase 1: Evaluating Pre-injury Vocational Plans
Phase 2: Developing New or Complementary Skills
Phase 3: Searching for Employment
Phase 4: Gaining Employment
SOCIAL SELF
PHYSICAL SELF
FACTORS OF THE WORKPLACE

Attributes of the Successfully Employed Participants Characterized by:

Doing	**Being**
- taking the initiative	- dedicated/committed
- setting goals	- determined
- striving for normalcy	- responsible
- persisting	- confident or not
- presenting professionally	

LEGEND

○ **The Self in Context**

- psychological self
- physical self
- social self

△ **Factors of the Workplace**

- temporary employment
- flexible work schedule
- presence of persons with disabilities in the workplace
- aids, modifications
- focus on ability/equality

In order to demonstrate the presence of a re-entry to employment process, I will present the individual experiences for each participant in all phases of re-entry. Following a brief re-introduction to each participant, data analysis will be illustrated (in table form) beginning with the extraction of meaning units and ending with the identification of a tag. Tags are then clustered to demonstrate the emergence of each phase in the re-entry process. The narrative discussion of the re-entry process will include both the individual and shared experiences of the participants. The context of the self and factors of the workplace appear to be essential in the return to work process, so they will also be discussed. A similar presentation style will be utilized to profile the attributes of the successfully employed research participants.

First however, it is necessary to outline the stages of theme construction, showing the formation of distinct phases in the re-entry process while maintaining the influence of the self and factors of the work place in this process.

Process of Re-entry

Through the procedure of analyzing participant interviews, I noticed the development of a process of re-entry to employment following the onset of quadriplegic injury. Upon completion of codification, tagged data (indicators) were clustered and then classified into four groups that reflect phases in the process of returning to competitive employment. The following section outlines the classification scheme with each phase name being descriptive of the participant's activity during that phase.

Theme Construction: Phase I-Evaluating Pre-injury Vocational Plans

This phase covers a period from rehabilitation (during hospitalization at a rehabilitation centre) through an activation process where individuals were motivated to begin vocational planning. Evaluating pre-injury vocational plans merges into the second phase of the re-entry process when the identification of an alternate career or modified work role occurs.

Descriptive Cluster	Indicator(s)
Pre-employment Activity	- pre-employment activities (watching television, visiting)
Motivating Factors that Prompt Vocational Planning	- entering a transition period - timing of vocational choice - dealing with lack of opportunity in rural areas - relocating- rural to city

Identifying Alternate Vocation or Modified Workrole	- adapting to appropriate employment - changing vocations post-injury - choosing a vocation - choosing a program

Theme Construction: Phase II-Developing New or Complementary Skills

This phase involves the enrollment in academic upgrading, college or university, and/or the participation in a community or on the job retraining program.

Descriptive Cluster	Indicator(s)
Type of Training or Retraining Program	- training program
The Retraining Experience	- challenge of retraining - educational challenge - lack of educational challenge - barriers to training - dealing with architectural barriers/education - retraining assistance - post-injury training

Theme Construction: Phase III-Searching for Employment

Phase three takes the re-entry process further with the search for employment. Participants mentioned aspects of the interview process, the importance of networking and feelings about being unemployed when describing the third phase in the re-entry process.

Descriptive Cluster	Indicator(s)
Experiencing Unemployment	- experiencing unemployment - recognizing the challenge in becoming employed

Initiating the Search for Employment	- networking - searching for employment
Surviving the Interview Process	- explaining disability - disclosing disability - interview process

Theme Construction: Phase IV-Gaining Employment

This cluster of indicators represent the securement of employment. In particular, participants described the presentation of an opportunity for employment and actually accepting the job.

Descriptive Cluster	Indicator(s)
The Presenting Opportunity for Employment	- window of opportunity - luck
Securing Employment	- getting the job

Jordan's experience.

Jordan is a thirty nine year old man, who as a result of a diving accident, sustained a severe spinal cord injury. Since his accident Jordan has worked in a variety of positions most of which were contractual in nature or governed by a specially funded project. Although he does not currently work in an environment where other persons with disabilities also work, Jordan has done so in the past.

Jordan's experience of re-entering the workforce following quadriplegic injury is dominated by the experiences of dealing with the physical and psychological changes that accompany the disability. Throughout the re-entry process Jordan repeatedly refers to the physical and spiritual strength that was required. For example, he states "everything else becomes so much, a much bigger burden because it's so much harder to deal with because you don't have the physical, mental and spiritual strength to deal with it" (JD:697-700) Most importantly, Jordan expressed his desire to achieve independence and be accountable for his performance of assigned job duties. For instance, he says "(you get the job) because of your ability, and if you don't perform on the basis of your ability then you're not going to be around very long" (JD: 255-257). Table 2 demonstrates the thematic development of the re-entry process. More importantly, the narrative review that follows appears to illustrate Jordan's engagement in this process.

Table 2
Jordan - The Re-entry Process

Meaning Unit	Paraphrase	Indicator(s)	Cluster
	Phase I: Evaluating Pre-Injury Vocational Plans		
R: How did you spend your day? (After discharge from hospital and before employment.)			
I: Just sitting in front of the computer. I had just got the computer so I was learning that (161-162)... Watching, watching a lot of tv (164-165)... It used to be, the television would be on the sound would be off, the stereo would be on, the computer would be on, I would be like information overload when I was here during the day (155-159).	Spent time learning the computer, and watching a lot of television. Prior to working would stay at home with tv on-sound of, stereo on and computer on-information overload at days end (boredom).	Pre-employment activities Entering a transition period Timing of vocational choice	Pre-employment activity Motivating factors that prompt vocational planning

Phase II: Developing New or Complementary Skills

Well there was a lot of training involved, on-the-job training, like going to NAIT and Grant MacEwan for this and that. Computer and time management and all that stuff (105-108).	As part of training on-the-job was to take courses such as computers and time management through NAIT and GMCC.	Post-injury Training	The Retraining Experience
(Experience with vocational counsellor to secure funding for retraining.)			
That was one of my low points. You know, I gave her my resume, we spent a couple of interviews talking about what I had to do.	Seeing an employment counsellor was a low point.	Retraining assistance	The Retraining Experience

And, I thought forget it...I just remember looking at that 12 page career plan. I don't mind doing it but I can't write very well. Like you should see some of what I've done-she ain't going to read any of what I wrote (510-521).	Long and difficult process to get funding assistance; interviews, lengthy career plan, poor writing skills.	Barriers to training	

Phase III - Searching for Employment

(After his contract finished at one particular job.) It was, well shit, what am I going to do. And it was tough everywhere, all the major cutbacks were happening, the gov't was starting to cut back. I thought where else am I going to go, what am I going to do? ...I thought oh God all these payments and I had to pay for all my supplies (640-652).	When unemployed was at time of cutbacks within government. Wondered how and where he would be employed and was concerned about financial situation as had to make supply and domestic payments.	Experiencing Unemployment	Experiencing Unemployment
R: So you would job search?			
JD: Just like anyone else. The thing is I know what to do now, I'm more knowledgeable (391-392).	Would job search just as others but feels he knows how to go about this.	Searching for employment	Initiating the Search for Employment
Joan put a bug in my ear and said, "oh, my mom is the manager. They're looking for somebody for the employment equity program" (176-184)	Joan informed him that mother who was in management position was looking for someone in the equity program.	Networking	

I can't say I tried to prepare for the interviewbut I was myself. I said this is me. I didn't try to impress anyone, this is what I am, this is what I can do. I focused on what I can do (495-500).	Didn't prepare for interview he presented himself in terms of what he can do.	Interview Process	Surviving the Interview Process
There was the odd time where there was a concern about the disability, more in terms of awareness and assistance. Like what do you need help with, like what adaptations do you need (502-506).	Concerns regarding the disability were in regards to assistance, adaptations and awareness.	Explaining Disability	Surviving the Interview Process

Phase IV: Gaining Employment

It was definitely a window of opportunity. The same situations are happening now for people even who don't have disabilities that are unemployed. A lot of times you don't get that job by getting out your resume. You got to be at the right place at the right time where the employer meets you, so yeah, some of it's luck, some of it's timing but there is that window of opportunity *106-113).	Was a window of Opportunity.	Window of Opportunity	The Presenting Opportunity for Employment
	He says that the same opportunity is available to employees without disabilities, it is more than getting out your resume.		
	Opportunity is a matter of timing and luck.	Luck	
	Window of opportunity	Window of Opportunity	
No one was telling me to go out and look for work, I mean I had an opportunity and I took it. I had a choice where I could say yes or no and I said yes(*82-86).	No one telling him to work, took opportunity that was offered.	Window of Opportunity	Presenting Opportunity for Employment
	Given a choice and accepted the job.	Getting the job	Securing Employment

The above thematic analysis seems to demonstrate that Jordan engaged in a process while re-entering the labour force following his spinal cord injury. Although Jordan does show progression through each of the proposed phases in the re-entry process he appears to place significant emphasis on presenting possibilities as essential to gaining employment. In fact he states "it (getting the job) was definitely a window of opportunity " (JD: *106).

Jordan appeared to activate the re-entry process when boredom presented itself following his discharge from the rehabilitation centre. Although he reports being busy "playing my stereo, watching tv while I was working on the computer "(JD: 167-168) and "I had people come in to visit me" (JD: 169), his first post-injury employment position provided "the getting out and doing something (aspect); a purpose to do something with life" (JD: 154-155).

Jordan did develop additional skills in preparation for post-injury employment but with few months between his discharge from rehabilitation and the securement of employment skill enhancement came via course work started while in hospital and through training on the job. Interestingly, Jordan attempted to secure funding from VRDP (Vocational Rehabilitation for Disabled Persons) to further develop his employment skills. However, the application process appeared to be a deterrent to accessing the assistance and funding required to upgrade his skills. Jordan states:

> and I thought forget it.. I just remember looking at that twelve page career plan. I didn't mind doing it but I can't write very well. Like you should see some of what I've done - she (vocational counsellor) ain't going to read any of what I wrote... I was depressed that it wasn't going to be as easy as I thought it would be, cause I was already doing school on my own and I thought that was the way to go was to get the schooling" (JD: 510-526).

It appears as if this obstacle, as well as boredom, prompted Jordan to begin his job search.

With regard to his search for work, Jordan effectively utilized networking as a method of being considered for positions of employment (JD: 174-181). Through his affiliation with other persons with disabilities and persons in the helping professions, Jordan learned about possible employment openings in this fashion and he also secured employment in this way.

Jordan indicated that when an opportunity for employment presented itself (whether his disability was an essential component or not) it was his responsibility to accept it. However, the offer of employment did not guarantee the continuance of it. In Jordan's words:

> you know it was kind of like well if I wasn't disabled I don't know if I'd have this job. And that wasn't hard to figure out. But at the same time, you know, I learned quickly that you don't take advantage of your disability. You're here because of you ability, and if you don't perform on the basis of your ability then you're not going to be around very long. It's not like I had to have it drilled into me, but there were a couple of instances, I wouldn't even call them reprimands, just indications through my

supervisor and how other people operated (JD: 249-261).

When I asked Jordan how he might advise a person with a disability to embark on the return to employment process he said "don't focus on disability" (JD: 734). He suggested "not taking anything for granted (the requirements of the job), you know doing the best you can" (JD: *352-353). Furthermore, Jordan indicated that an employee with a disability who is prepared (to fulfill the requirements of the job) will ensure an easier transition for the employer. Interestingly, Jordan also reported that employers too must focus on the abilities of the potential worker rather than on the disability. He states "the employee (must plan) more so than the employer. But if the employee is prepared it makes it a lot easier for the employer. Say I can do this, this and this. Don't look at the disability" (JD: 736-739).

In summary, Jordan's return to work following the onset of his spinal cord injury followed a process. His desire to escape boredom and bring meaning to his life after his injury appeared to motivate Jordan to initiate the return to work process. Adequately skilled, Jordan networked and opportunities for employment emerged. Jordan has "only been unemployed for two months out of the last five years" since the onset of his physical disability (JD: 299-302). The role of the physical, psychological and social components of the self as well as factors of the workplace in the process of re-entry will be reviewed in detail in the coming sections of this chapter. Through such examinations additional meaning of the process of re-entry for Jordan will be presented.

Joseph's experience.

Joseph had lived in a remote Northern community when he was injured in a snowmobile accident. With the most appropriate treatment facility located in Edmonton, Joseph decided to stay here at the conclusion of his rehabilitation. Since the onset of his physical disability, Joseph has worked in several positions that were secured as a result of trial of work placements following his involvement in retraining programs. In at least one case, the position was funded by a special project to encourage the hiring of persons with disabilities. As was the case with Jordan, Joseph has worked in an environment where other persons with disabilities also work.

Joseph's experience of re-entering the work force is highlighted by an extensive period of retraining. This entailed upgrading a grade seven education and attending college. Joseph indicated that adjustment to the physical and psychological aspects of his disability were essential prior to initiating the process of re-entering the work force. He indicates "they have to adjust, to go through their own process to get to where they are going to go (J: 790-791)... it takes a good five to six years just to get readjusted " (J: 877-878). Joseph portrays his experience of returning to work in a matter of fact fashion such that emotionality is seldom apparent in the stories he tells. The following table (table 3) outlines the thematic analysis of the process of re-entry and the narrative section provides evidence fo Joseph's movement through this process.

Table 3
Joseph - The Re-Entry Process

Phase I - Evaluating Pre-Injury Vocational Plans

Meaning Unit	Paraphrase	Indicator(s)	Cluster
I tried staying at home and watching tv. No, I didn't like that at all (459-460).	Although he tried being at home watching television he didn't enjoy it.	Pre-employment activities	Pre-employment activity
(Joseph) had lived in Northern Canada and came to Edmonton for treatment for his SCI.) He had worked at... taking the rigs off and putting them on barges (97-98). (As a result of the manual labour he was unable to return to the North.) He goes on to say... (the change in career) happened because of the circumstances (335-336).	Joseph worked as a labourer in Northern Canada. Relocated to Edmonton for treatment of SCI and the circumstances (SCI and physical labour background) led to an alternation in career.	Dealing with lack of opportunity in rural area Relocating - rural to city	Motivating factors that prompt vocational planning
It's not grunt work anymore, it's brain work (166).	No longer doing physical work; rather he is using his brain.	Adapting to appropriate employment	Identifying of alternate vocation or modified work role
(If he hadn't been injured)... I wouldn't have gone back to school (699).	Wouldn't have returned to school.	Choosing a vocation	

Phase II: Developing New or Complementary Skills

I made my mind up to go back to school, which was electronics and then from electronics I went to college... for job preparation (361-376).	Decided to return to school, entered electronics program and then participated in a job preparation course at a college.	Training program	Type of training program
(Joseph upgraded a grade 7 level of education to obtain his grade 12 equivalency.) After three years of intense upgrading... well, I got burnout so I had to leave it (121-128).	After an intense upgrading period of three years he left it being burnt out.	Educational challenge	The retraining experience

Phase III: Searching for Employment

(Joseph's description of his first post-injury interview.) Uncomfortable (515).	Discomfort with interview.	Interview process	Surviving the interview process
(The interview)... we didn't know each other, I don't think he ever interviewed anybody (in a chair) before... (the interviewer was unsure of himself) so was I (528-542).	Employer hadn't interviewed anyone in a chair before; both were unsure of themselves.	Interview process	

Phase IV: Gaining Employment

The way I got this one (the job) was through the college (job preparation program). This was a job experience; so I was here for two months before, then went back to college... then (employer) asked if I could come back (486-500).	This job came as a result of an earlier work placement which turned into employment.	Getting the job	Securing employment

Joseph's experience of re-entering the labour force following the onset of physical disability emphasizes the need for change. As indicated in Joseph's background history and the thematic analysis of the re-entry process, he appeared to encounter both cultural and occupational change with the onset of his spinal cord injury.

With a relocation from a remote Northern community where he had worked as a manual labourer with a grade seven education, Joseph faced the challenges of the urban environment as well as an altered work situation. Brought to Edmonton for rehabilitation, Joseph left his home town of 3000 people. He describes the transition as "quite a shock" (J: 727-728). Following a two year physical rehabilitation program Joseph required "a good five or six years just to get readjusted " (J: 877-878) prior to considering a plan to return to work. At a point in this life when he was bored with watching television, Joseph's friends with disabilities encouraged him to upgrade his grade seven education. "A lot of my friends told me I was better off to (upgrade)" (J: 140-142). After three years of intense upgrading Joseph "got burnout and had to leave it" (J: 127). Following a brief reprieve, Joseph continued to advance his employment skills. Again "friends sort of nudged me" (J: 383) into pursuing further skill development. "I then went to the phoenix program (an electronics training program for persons with disabilities) and then to Concordia (for job preparation)" (J: 107-109). With the identification of alternate work that entailed problem solving rather than physical labour, Joseph engaged in a trial of work placement that eventually evolved into full time employment. He described the interview process for the placement as "uncomfortable" (J: 515) but noted that once he had been accepted and worked the entire placement (2 months), he was asked to return as a full time employee (J: 500-501). Joseph gives credit for his success in re-entering the work force to Ron, a friend who encouraged him to upgrade his education and pursue employment. Joseph says "I wouldn't have been working" if he had not have been counselled by Ron (J: 444).

It is apparent from the above narrative description of Joseph's re-entry experiences that he participated in all aspects of the re-entry process. However, with a great deal of upgrading and the attainment of employment initiated through a work placement, Joseph seemed to place a greater emphasis on phase two (developing new or complementary skills) of the re-entry process. In reviewing his experiences of the re-entry process, I noticed that Joseph seldom elaborated on his descriptions. He seemed to recount the progression from onset of disability to a return to employment as a series of concrete events that were necessary in achieving his goals. Rather than lengthy discussions on the movement through this process, Joseph was frank yet sincere when narrating his story. When factors of the workplace and components of the self are reviewed, it will be demonstrated that although to a lesser degree (than mentioned by other participants) these facets of the re-entry process were important to Joseph.

Michael's experience.

Michael became physically disabled when he was involved in a motor vehicle accident at the age of fifteen. Since he was still in high school, Michael continued his education while engaging in a physical rehabilitation program. Upon completion of high school and subsequent post secondary education, Michael entered the workforce. As with Jordan and Joseph, on several occasions Michael has been employed in positions that were funded by the government (for example, Canada Job Strategies). Michael currently works in an agency which provides services to persons with disabilities. Several of his co-workers are also disabled.

Michael's method of re-entry also focused on the practicalities of returning to work. For example, his movement from the educational to employment environment seemed to follow a natural progression. In the expression of his re-entry process, Michael's experiences denote the importance of self presentation and commitment to his work. Table 4 illustrates the thematic analysis of Michael's movement from the time of evaluating his vocational plans to the securement of employment.

Table 4
Michael - The Re-entry Process

Meaning Unit	Paraphrase	Indicator(s)	Cluster
Phase I: Evaluating Pre-Injury Vocational Plans			
I knew I wasn't going home because up there... there wasn't anything for me (604-605). (Michael had lived in a rural community.)	Knew he wouldn't go home because there wasn't a lot for him there.	Dealing with lack of opportunity in rural areas.	Motivating factors that prompt vocational planning
(Inaccessibility)... that's basically why I moved from the small community up there to here. If you go there its inappropriate, or it's not inappropriate but you can't get in(818-821).	Moved from rural Alberta because of lack of accessibility.	Relocating - rural to city.	
Because it's not very realistic for a quadriplegic pulling on a wrench at that time (47-48). (Had considered being a mechanic prior to injury.)	Not realistic for a quadriplegic to pull a wrench.	Adapting to appropriate employment	Identifying of alternate vocation or modified work role
I think I just had to readapt to what was available out there for me (44-45).	Had to readapt after injury to what was available to him.	Adapting to appropriate employment	
I though, well I'll try some accounting and see how I feel about that (527-528).	Decision to try accounting.	Choosing a program	

Phase II: Developing New or Complementary Skills

I did my computer program in three years, my microcomputer management, ...then right after that I just stayed and did my business administration (422-426).	Took two different, difficult diplomas in succession.	Training program	Type of training program
I couldn't go back to school (in the hospital) because I had turned 18 at that time... and there was only a month left in the school year and I thought let me finish my month and then I'll go (move out of the children's hospital), but the way the hospital system works they said no (557-572).	Couldn't finish school at the children's hospital because he had turned 18.	Educational challenge	The Retraining Experience
(For Retraining) I got one student loan one semester and that was it. I paid for my own meds and stuff like that (1251-1255).	Received one student loan for one semester and had to cover his own meds, etc.	Barrriers to training	

Phase III: Searching for Employment

And word got around that I was getting out of college (322-323).	Word of mouth advertised he was getting out of college.	Networking	Initiating the search for employment
What I do is that I'll explain to them over the phone that I'm in a chair (134-135).	Gives explanation by telephone that he has a physical disability.	Explaining disability	Surviving the Interview Process

I felt very comfortable because it was like I was familiar with my surroundings so I didn't feel out of the ordinary. I was going to school there for a couple of years so I knew the ins and outs of the school. So I wasn't new to it (367-371).	Interview was comfortable because past history in the surroundings let him feel comfortable.	Interview process	
I was a little timid at first (381).	Was initially timid at (government) interview.	Interview process	

Phase IV: Gaining Employment

After my schooling I went through xxx (a non-profit agency) on the one year project then I did a project at yyy (another agency); manpower I think (*211-215).	After schooling held project jobs.	Getting the job	Securing employment

Although Michael had no pre-injury work experience, he appears to have engaged in a similar process of entering the workplace after spinal cord injury as described by other participants. With the passage through each phase in the re-entry process, Michael seemed to emphasize the activities of phase two - developing new or complementary skills. Perhaps this was an indication of his need to develop employment skills, something lacking in his pre-injury adolescence, so that he would be marketable in the labour force.

Michael's experience of preparing for involvement in the labour force began with a re-examination of his career goals. He states "I think I just had to readapt to what was available out there for me... because it's not very realistic for a quadriplegic pulling on a wrench... I think realistically I had to, you know, had to make some alternative choice" (M: 44-56). Although Michael knew that he would have to pursue an alternate occupation, he had not yet finished high school and his desire to do so took precedence over further vocational planning. Michael indicates:

> I finished my grade 10 and then I went home and had pneumonia, bronchitis. I couldn't go back to school (at the children's hospital) because I had turned 18 at that time. Then I caught pneumonia and so they put me back in the old part (of the hospital). I went back and forth and I did that for a year and then did grade 11 and then quit while I

> was still in the old part. I had to get out of it because I had recovered from my bronchitis enough and then a bed came open at XX Extended Care Centre and they said I had to go and I couldn't stay at the old place. I didn't finish and there was only a month left in the school year and I thought let me finish my month and then I'll go, but the way the hospital system works they said no... Basically the final year I took all by correspondence. I graduated from the YY basically through correspondence (M: 551-578).

Upon graduation Michael reported that one of his school friends (a peer with cerebral palsy) encouraged him to go to college (M: 592-595). Michael says:

> I knew I wasn't going home (Northern Alberta) because up there there is not really a heck of a lot for me. He (friend) talked to me about this microcomputer management course and it was the first time the XX (training facility) offered it... So we (Michael and his friend) thought what the hell lets try it (M: 604-611).

Michael finished his program in three years and went on to complete a diploma in business administration.

The training programs in which Michael engaged provided practicum work experience as an integral part of the program. With placements often leading to employment, Michael indicated that the interview process was less stressful than perhaps the other participants experienced (M: *205-207). He stated that "the head of the program usually came with me (to the interview)... and they (the employer) knew who you were and things like that" (M: 395-403). In review, it seems as though Michael's experience of the interview process was generally positive (M: 367-371).

With regard to the securement of employment, Michael indicated that he learned about potential employment positions through his work placements or through his contacts with the disabled community. For example, Michael says " I went through XXX on a one year project " (M: *211-212). As with Joseph, Michael gives credit to his friend Ron for support and encouragement in entering the labour force. "I give quite a bit of credit to where I'm at ... to Ron" (M: 756-758). Michael also reported that he has been employed in positions that were specially funded to encourage hiring of persons with disabilities. "Like after my schooling I went through XXX on a one year project-CJS, and then another with YYY- a manpower project" (M: *211-215). As with the other participants, factors of the workplace and the context of the self played an important role in the successful attainment of employment. In the following sections of this chapter these moderating influences will be reviewed.

Wayne's experience.

As a result of a farm accident Wayne is physically disabled. Unlike other participants (Joseph, Ron, Fred, Jordan, and Michael), Wayne did not drastically alter his vocation following the onset of his spinal cord injury. Prior to injury Wayne was employed as a store manager full time, as well as maintaining the work required on the family farm. Wayne continues to work at two occupations; however, he is now working in the city while managing his farm in a rural Alberta community. Paralleling the circumstances of other participants, Wayne works with other persons with disabilities and his current employment position was initially funded through Canada Job Strategies.

Inherent in his descriptions of the process of re-entry, Wayne expressed the importance of accepting oneself as a person with a disability. In particular, Wayne's initial need to deal with his disability on a psychological level prior to engaging in vocational planning appeared to be critical. He states "(I had) to go through the depression stage and that probably took two to three years of my life" (W: 131-133). Factors of the workplace also seem important to Wayne in terms of accessing and maintaining employment. The thematic analysis of the re-entry process from Wayne's perspective is presented below (table 5). The narrative review that follows gives evidence for Wayne's engagement in this process.

Table 5
Wayne - The Re-entry Process

Meaning Unit	Paraphrase	Indicator(s)	Cluster
Phase I: Evaluating Pre-Injury Vocational Plans			
(You) got to go through the depression stage and that probably took two or three years of my life... (131-133).	Spent first two or three years in a state of depression.	Pre-employment activities	Pre-employment activity
I finally snapped out of things. You say, okay do you want to sit back and be nothing and do nothing and you know, just live day for day or do you want to make something of yourself (150-154). So then we decided to expand the farm... I said I'm going to be part of it (155-158).	I snapped out of the depression and asked myself whether I wanted to do nothing or make something of my life. Decided to expand the farm and to be part of it.	Entering a transition period	Motivating factors that prompt vocational planning

Okay, we've got the farm going again, we're back into it. Let's test the waters and see how it feels and come to the city and see what there is there (191-194).	Once the farm was going again he decided to go to the city to look at the opportunities.	Relocating-rural to city	
No, I don't get up on the tractor. That's the only part I don't do (328-329)... I raise registered cattle so I'm very heavily involved with that, with marketing of grain, ...there's all the paperwork applying for funds, ...there's all that to keep track of (341-349).	Doesn't operate the tractor, rather he engages in marketing and administration on the farm.	Adapting to appropriate employment Modified work role	Identifying of alternate vocation

Phase II: Developing New or Complementary Skills

I took some upgrading in agriculture; courses that I was interested in anyway (141-144).	Took some upgrading courses in agriculture.	Training program	Type of training program

Phase III: Searching for Employment

(The job) evolved from the conference. I created my own job basically, which is great, not many people can do that (278-295).	His position evolved from a project he worked on; feels fortunate to have created his own job.	Searching for employment	Initiating the search for employment
I network with a lot of the xx dealers here in Edmonton... They have asked me to come work with them a number of times and I just say well not right now but in the future I might take you up on that (835-845).	Through networking he has been offered employment on several occasions.	Networking	

Phase IV: Gaining Employment

Don't turn it down. Especially if you have something, you know let's say you have an employer offering you a job, don't ever turn it down (975-978).	If you're offered a job don't ever turn it down.	Window of opportunity	The presenting opportunity for employment
It's (the job) a chance of a lifetime (973).	Employment is a chance of a lifetime.	Window of opportunity	

In Wayne's descriptions of re-entering the workforce following spinal cord injury, he appears to have engaged in all phases of the re-entry process with phase two, developing new or complementary skills, being the least important. Unlike other participants (Michael, Ron and Joseph), Wayne did not view living in a rural community as a deterrent to achieving his career goals. Rather, following a period of adjustment (as indicated in table 3;W: 131-133) Wayne returned to his home in rural Alberta and decided to continue his career in farming with a modified role.

> You can go back to farming to a certain extent. You may not be able to, you know you may have an injury where it doesn't allow you to actually get into the tractor but you may be able to do all the books, you may be able to do the buying and selling, you know that sort of thing and still be involved in something you like to do (W: 191-199)... I mean agriculture is my, it's probably my lifestyle you know you grow up with it. There's this saying once a country boy always a country boy (W: 225-228).

Paralleling his pre-injury work history, Wayne also continues to be employed at a position off of the family farm.

Interestingly, Wayne inadvertently embarked on phase three-searching for employment. Involved as a volunteer in a farm fair for persons with disabilities, Wayne was offered a position as a social service professional with AAA (a non-profit society serving the needs of the disabled community) at the completion of the conference (W: 278-285). In describing his job search as "natural" (W: 292), Wayne says "I created my own job basically, which is great, not many people can do that" (W: 278-295). Residing and working in an urban centre and farming in a rural community demonstrates Wayne's flexibility and commitment to his career. He states "I'm in the city but I have the freedom to go to the country. I still have the freedom (of the country) and the luxury of the city" (W: 235-237).

Wayne's current employment position was initially funded through Canada Job Strategies but it is now self-sufficient. He works with other persons with disabilities and provides the following advice.

> A person looking for a job wants to be employable and wants to make something of themselves and shouldn't give up. There's got to be somebody that you know or someone that a friend may know, a friend of a friend down the road or something that can give you a start, you know in doing something, anything (W: 822-829).

In summarizing his experience of re-entering the workforce following the onset of severe disability, Wayne says "You've got to throw everything (who you are, your skills and your limitations) back into the jar, shake it up and put it back on the table again" (W: 863-864). This sentiment is further exemplified in the following discussion of the components of the self as they influence the return to work process.

Ron's experience.

Ron has been physically disabled for over twenty eight years. In sharing his experiences of the re-entry process, Ron indicated that he relocated to an urban area as his home town had little to offer a person in a wheelchair. Living in the city in the early 1970's, Ron described his pursuit of education and employment as a significant challenge. Emotional and physical struggles are apparent in Ron's experiences of unemployment, in the process of re-skilling, and in accessing the labour force. As such, Ron consistently refers to the physical, social and psychological entities that comprise the concept of the self. Ron is currently employed by an agency whose mandate is to counsel other persons with disabilities. Several of his coworkers are disabled. On one occasion Ron was employed during the summer months in a position supported by special government funding. Table 6 demonstrates the theme construction of the four phases of re-entry to employment following spinal cord injury. Ron's passage through these phases is further exemplified in the narrative summary that follows table 6.

Table 6
Ron: The Re-entry Process

Meaning Unit	Paraphrase	Indicator(s)	Cluster
Phase I: Evaluating Pre-Injury Vocational Plans			
After my accident I just moved back to town, a small town, my place became the drop-in centre for all my friends (104-109).	Moved back to small town after accident and his home became drop-in centre for his friends.	Pre-employment activities	Pre-employment activity
I didn't see any options to go to school. You know I mean going back to my school in town, people were younger than me (73-78).	Didn't see school as an option in rural community as a return would mean a return to school with younger peers.	Dealing with lack of opportunity in rural area	Motivating factors that prompt vocational planning
I don't recall anybody who had a disability that worked (160-161)... I was not a person who liked school. You know but I knew I needed it. I knew I couldn't just go back and earn big money in the oil patch so I went (202-205).	Didn't know anyone with a disability who worked. Knew he needed further education as could not return to physical labour in the oil patch.	Timing of vocational choice Changing vocations post-injury	Identifying of alternate vocation or modified work role
Phase II: Developing New or Complementary Skills			
Transportation at that time was, there was a wheelchair van, it was owned by Yellow Cab but it was very expensive and they had to take me up and down stairs at Alberta College because it was inaccessible (171-179).	Transportation provided by Yellow Cab was expensive and he had to be assisted with the stairs at the training institution	Barriers to training	The retraining experience

And going back to school in the city didn't seem like an option either because there was no transportation or accessibility (95-97).	Going back to school in the city didn't seem to be an option either as there was no transportation or accessibility.	Barriers to training	
When leaving the University, the cab drivers would help me transfer and the cabs didn't want to take me. As soon as they saw it was a wheelchair they would drive away (249-251).	Because the driver had to help transfer him they would drive away as soon as they saw he was in a wheelchair.	Educational challenge	

Phase III: Searching for Employment

(Year of unemployment) was the most, probably the most terrible year in my life. You know outside of the first year that I was injured. You know being without a job was tough because I, my whole self-esteem was based on my work. And I couldn't find a job and I had applied everywhere and I had to go to a psychiatrist because I was getting depressed (631-640).	A year of unemployment was the worst year of his life (outside of his injury). Being without work affected his self-esteem and although he had applied for work he couldn't find anything. Was seeing a psychiatrist for depression.	Experiencing Unemployment	Experiencing unemployment
Nobody would give me interviews. With the few interviews I did get I didn't get the job (675-677).	Had difficulties getting interviews and was unsuccessful with them.	Recognizing the challenge in becoming employed	
(With the job search) I got so many rejection letters (784-785).	Received many letters of rejection.	Searching for employment	Initiating the search for employment

(Had been involved in advocacy work) and I went back and started University and after that somebody asked me if I would be interested in working because they had met me at a conference (406-409).	Someone he had met at a conference asked if he was interested in employment.	Networking	
I felt at a distinct disadvantage because the guy (employer) had to come out and help me into the building because it was inaccessible - it had one step (698-702).	Was at a disadvantage in the interview as he couldn't get in the building and the employer had to assist him.	Interview process	Surviving the interview process
I thought my interview went well because I answered all the questions but I didn't feel very comfortable with the guy because I had the feeling he didn't care about somebody in a wheelchair (705-709).	Thought the interview went well but sensed the employer didn't care about persons in wheelchairs.	Interview process	
So you are at a distinct disadvantage in an interview setting because you have to get rid of their (the employers) baggage; their ideas about disability (1071-1075).	You are at a disadvantage in the interview as you have to get rid of the employers misconceptions about disability.	Interview process	

Phase IV: Gaining Employment

In all cases (jobs) with me it was the window of opportunity (241-242).	All jobs presented a window of opportunity.	Window of opportunity	The presenting opportunity for employment
(Getting the job had to do with) luck and people I knew networked with me (247-249).	Getting the job had to do with networking and luck.	Luck Window of opportunity	

(He) couldn't find anybody to take (job) on that had a disability and it had to be someone with a disability. The Board said, well you haven't got a job, why don't you take it on? (502-506).	Was asked to take on a job as the employer needed someone with a disability.	Getting the job	Securing employment

Ron clearly demonstrates his involvement in a process of re-entry when sharing his employment experiences. Motivated by the lack of opportunity in a rural community and realization that he would be unable to return to work in his former occupation (because of the physical demands of being an oil field operator), Ron relocated to an urban centre.

> Before my injury I worked as a gas field operator for an oil company and I couldn't go back to doing that after my injury (R: 39-43)... After my accident I just, well I moved back to town, a small town and my place became the drop in centre for all my friends and after a year and a half it became too much to sit around and become a drop in centre, not doing anything - because my friends were working. They would drop in after work. So I moved back to the city (R: 105-112).

Although Ron was less than keen to return to school, he said "(going back to school in rural Alberta) just didn't seem like an option to me...and going back to school in the city didn't seem like an option either because there was no transportation"(R: 91-97). However, Ron did begin an upgrading program. At a time when very few people with disabilities engaged in educational programming, access and transportation were significant challenges for a person in a wheelchair.

> Transportation at that time was, there was a wheelchair van, it was owned by Yellow Cab but it was very expensive and they (drivers) had to take me up and down stairs at Alberta College because it was inaccessible (R: 171-178).

In the interim of graduating from Alberta College and attending University, Ron separated from his wife. Ron does not elaborate on the circumstances of the separation; saying only that at the time of the motor vehicle accident "I was leaving my wife" (R: 1235).

Of significant importance to Ron's experience of re-entering the work force was his involvement in activities identified by phase two - developing new or complementary skills. Rather than the academic nature of this university program presenting the most apparent challenge, it was again the issue of poor accessibility and transportation that dominated his experiences. Ron reports that "some days you would be at the university till seven, eight, or nine o'clock at night waiting for a cab because they would come and then they would leave. I tried to make friends with some of them but you just couldn't get the same cab driver" (R: 255-265). Furthermore, accessibility at the university presented a problem.

> Everyday I used to push through university and always had to make sure that your classes weren't too far away because if you don't, you would have the trouble of getting across campus because it was cold. You had real difficulty. (R: 279-283)... You had to watch some (classes), in CAB for instance, they would put you at the top of the lecture theatre and if you've ever been in CAB you enter in the top of the lecture theatre and then there is a step and we sat in this two foot landing with the door behind you. It used to drive me crazy because I always had the suspicion somebody would be late for class and come bashing through the door and it would hit me...(I would go flying) down the stairs. (R: 278-299)... And in the Tory lecture there were two sets of stairs. One was five stairs and the other was three and I used to have to always get some students to help me down the stairs (R: 300-308)... It was tough but I didn't know any better (R: 315-316).

Upon completion of a four year university degree, Ron began his search for employment. At this time he was living in an extended care facility and appeared to view employment as a vehicle to independent living. He says:

> I mean you just don't like living there (in hospital) and the only way out was either to get married to someone who is going to take you out, or you work and get enough money so that you can get out... I would rather work than get married to get out (R: 1020-1028).

However, the search for and securement of employment also presented challenges.

During a period of unemployment where Ron describes his situation as "probably the most terrible year in my life" (R: 631), outside of the year he was injured, he sent out resumes and was interviewed for several positions. Finally, through networking, an opportunity presented itself and Ron entered into full time employment. Thus, the data suggests that Ron passed through a process of re-entry from the time of considering his vocational future to the securement of employment. As with other participants, an examination of the components of the self and factors of the workplace will provide greater insight into Ron's employment experience.

Fred's experience.

Fred reconsidered his pre-injury occupation as a chef when he sustained his spinal cord injury. This transition seemed to involve an intense emotional process for Fred; one that he continues to struggle with today. As with the other participants, Fred altered his pre-injury occupation and clearly engaged in the phases of the re-entry process. Thematic development is shown in table 7 and the narrative section that follows provides evidence for Fred's participation in the re-entry process.

Fred's experience of re-entering the work force is dominated by the challenges presented by the physical disability. From the early phases of evaluating pre-injury vocational plans to securing (and maintaining) employment, perseverance is apparent in the movement through this process.

The computer analyst position Fred currently holds is in an environment that provides programming for persons with disabilities. Although Fred is the sole worker with a disability, he indicated that coworkers often overlook his physical limitations. Fred's position was initiated through a Canada Job Strategies grant but is now funded by the organization in which he works.

Table 7
Fred: The Re-entry Process

Meaning Unit	Paraphrase	Indicator(s)	Cluster
	Phase I: Evaluating Pre-Injury Vocational Plans		
By the time I got out of the hospital, within 6 months I was climbing the walls. Bored silly (132-134).	After six months out of rehabilitation he was bored.	Transition period	Motivating factors that prompt vocational planning
Within months of being home I thought I have to do something. It's crazy sitting here, bored stupid (145-147).	Was bored stupid after months of being home.	Timing of vocational choice	

(A return to his former job as a chef was...) completely out of the question for reasons of practicality; there was no way I could work fast enough and just simply couldn't do the lifting, the cutting, so it was a very physical job and it was just something I would not be able to manage (31-34).	It was out of the questions to return to his job as a chef as he could not manage the physical aspects of the job.	Changing vocations post-injury	Identifying alternate vocation or modified work role
I realized pretty quickly that obviously cooking and being a chef was out of the question (29-30).	Realized that being a chef was out of the question.	Changing vocations post-injury	
Well I wasn't sure about computers and didn't really know much about the computing field (but he decided to give it a try) (95-97).	Decided to give computing a try, although he was not knowledgable in the field.	Choosing a vocation	

Phase II: Developing New or Complementary Skills

Well this (a training program) was basically a project that was going to take people with disabilities and give them computer skills (71-72).	A training project would give him computer skills.	Training program	Type of training program
The course I was struggling with when my Dad had a stroke I ended up getting a 2. And at that point in time I had registered so I was thrown out of (the program) because my average was too low and (I was) told to withdraw. I managed to go see an Associate Dean or whatever, and I said "listen there has been a lot going on, can I have another chance?" So he gave it to me, "okay we'll let you back in for a year but your grades have got to be up there!, and, ah, he said "think of a rocket, and I am giving you a window", it was sort of like the space program talking about the launch window. I sort of thought okay fine this is what I've got to do, and, ah I got reaccepted to computing science and basically struggled the rest of the way through (235-246).	The course he was taking when his Dad was ill he did very poorly in and was asked to withdraw from the program.	Challenge of retraining	The retraining experience
	He spoke with a University official and was given the opportunity to continue; he was reaccepted and struggled to complete the program.	Educational challenge	
(When completing a course) there wasn't one (day) that I stayed in my chair all night but there were several where I got	One terrible course he took required long hours.	Educational challenge	

home at 3:00 and left again at 7:00. Oh, that was a terrible course (336-338).			

Phase III: Searching for Employment

I mean knowing xxx. I may have gotten in here because of my connections with xx (*393-394).	Knowing someone may have assisted him in getting work.	Networking	Initiating the search for employment
(First job since onset of spinal cord injury.) ...I got this call saying "listen, there's a guy in the department of xx looking for someone who's got the skills you've got". I mentioned to them that I'm disabled and it still didn't bother them all. So, I went in there for an interview at 11:00 and was hired on by 2:00. I started to work the next day (279-284).	Mentioned to the employer that he was disabled when he was called for a job - the employer said it didn't matter.	Disclosing disability	Surviving the interview process
	Went for the interview and was hired shortly thereafter.	Interview process	

Phase IV: Gaining Employment

I may have gotten in here because of my connections with xx and you know the fact that there was a job strategies grant there that we could take advantage of but I sure as hell haven't held on to the job for five years by being a token crip (*394-399).	Perhaps employment placement occurred as a result of network or a particular disability program but sustaining employment was a result of skill.	Window of opportunity	The presenting opportunity for employment

In this day and age you get to take advantage of any opportunity that's there. If it's a job strategies program that will get you in the door, it will get you in there so you can prove yourself, so you know, go for it (*353-357).	In the current job market one should take advantage of any opportunity.	Window of opportunity	The presenting opportunity for employment
	Get in there and prove yourself.	Getting the job	Securing employment

The above thematic analysis suggests that Fred participated in a process while re-entering the work force. Although each phase of the re-entry process appeared to be emotionally and physically challenging for Fred, evaluating pre-injury vocational plans and developing new or complimentary skills were the most vivid in his descriptions of the employment experience. Motivated by boredom and the realization that physical limitations would prevent him from pursuing his chosen occupation, Fred embarked on developing skills in preparation for an alternate career. However, this transition did not appear to be an easy one.

In his discussion of realizing that he would not return to work as a chef, the intensity of Fred's experience is realized. Fred says:

> It took a long time (to accept) however, I realized pretty quickly that obviously cooking and being a chef was out of the question. Completely out of the question for reasons of practicality, there was no way I could work fast enough and just simply couldn't do the lifting, the cutting, so it was a very physical job and it was just something I would not be able to manage (F: 29-34)... (Now) I find it extremely frustrating, trying to work (cooking at home) with the staff at the building. Number one, some of them have no cooking skills whatsoever, so trying to explain to them for example how to bone off a chicken breast, how to hold a knife, where to cut, how far to cut, is extremely difficult-because I can't demonstrate, I can't hold that damn knife! (frustrated) (F: 45-51).

However, knowing that his career as a chef would not be practical (F: 32), Fred examined his options. Having been approached by a vocational counsellor while in rehabilitation, Fred considered the field of computer technology as an alternative occupation. "The notion of computers and being able to communicate and get it to do what I wanted it to do opened up possibilities. It wasn't necessarily something that I really wanted to do, but what the hell" (F: 78-84). At this point in time, Fred enrolled in the University of Alberta to complete a specialization certificate in computer science. As with Ron, Fred found post-secondary education challenging. However, unlike Ron, it was the academic requirements of Fred's program and the strains on his family that presented the greatest concern.

> My progress through the university was checkered. I did very well in some (courses), others I was blown out of the water. Well calculus courses were in particular difficult as with computer science you have to have a lot of math. The worst or second worst experience was the strain of being at home trying to make sure that my care was either being organized or whatever. In realizing the strain on my Dad and stepmother (who did his care; his mother passed away just months before his injury) ... And finally I was doing my second calculus course. And the strains finally took a toll, and my Dad had his first stroke (sad-tearful). And I very much blamed myself (F: 213-228).

This sense of sadness is also present in the search for and securement of employment phases and is documented further in the discussions of the self and factors of the workplace.

At the successful completion of his university training, Fred went on to look for employment. In general, as was indicated by Michael, the interview process provided a positive experience.

> I got this call saying 'listen there's a guy in the Department of XX looking for someone who's got the skills that you've got', I mentioned to them that I'm disabled and it didn't bother them at all. So, I went in there for an interview at about 11:00 and was hired on by 2:00 (F: 279-283)...The interview with the Department of XX went very well (F: 292-293).

Perhaps this is also an indication of the value of networking as a means of expressing interest in a potential employment position. As Fred reported networking was a useful tool but the maintenance of employment is reflected in ability.

> I may have gotten in here because of my connections with John and you know the fact that there was a job strategies grant there that we could take advantage of, but I sure as hell haven't held on to the job for five years by being the token crip (F: *394-399).

As noted above, Fred's first full time post-injury employment position was funded by Canada Job Strategies in an organization whose mandate is to serve the disabled community. Fred continues to be employed by this organization.

In summary, all participants engaged in a process of re-entering the work force following the onset of spinal cord injury. Although each participant passed through the phases of re-entry at different rates and with greater or lesser intensity, the above analysis indicates that for Jordan, Joseph, Michael, Ron, Wayne and Fred such a progression did occur. The above review of the re-entry process presents the phases of re-entry to employment demonstrating that movement though the phases is intricate as it is influenced by moderating factors. As suggested in the narrative summary of each participant's experiences, factors of the workplace and components of the self make a significant contribution to the process of re-entry. I will now turn to an analysis of each of these moderating influences and discuss how they impacted the progression of each participant's movement through the proposed phases of re-entry.

The Self in Context

When describing the re-entry to employment experience, participants noted the significance of the self in this process. Identified by indicators of the self, three clusters (subthemes) emerged as essential components in the successful re-entry to employment. They have been identified as the physical self, the social self and the psychological self. It is apparent from the data that these three components interact and are of greater significance at varying times in the process of re-entry.

As with the thematic analysis that led to the development of the four phase re-entry process, subthemes of the 'self in context' were arrived at through the extraction of meaning units, paraphrasing, tagging and grouping of like tags to form a common theme. In this case, the 'self in context' is the grandfather theme with the psychological, physical and social selves being subthemes that comprise the overall header. The following table outlines the classification scheme with each descriptor being defined by the indicators of each component of the self. The process of thematic analysis is also demonstrated in table form for each descriptive cluster.

Theme Construction: The Self In Context

Descriptive Cluster/Subtheme	Indicator(s)
Physical Self	- personal care requirements - health concerns - physical limitations - skills in activities of daily living (ADL) - wheelchair mobility - period of relearning - disability a challenge
Social Self	- personal support - peer support - agency support

Psychological Self	- coping with disability - psychological shift - psychological state - depth of emotion

Physical self.

The physical self is comprised of the challenges faced by the participants due to physical limitations that are imposed by the disability. Personal care requirements that were given little consideration prior to injury seem more significant and all-encompassing with the onset of the physical disability. Participants appeared to indicate that considerable energy is required in the completion of activities of daily living (ADL) and work related tasks. Coping with the frustration of not being able to access one's environment through mobility from a wheelchair, or medical complications that required hospitalization, are examples of the physical self that research participants seemed to perceive as integral to the return to work process.

In order to demonstrate the role of the physical self in the re-entry process, I have presented the data in table and narrative form. Table 8 provides examples of thematic development of the physical self in the re-entry process for each participant. Additional meaning will emerge in the narrative section that follows.

Table 8
Subtheme: Physical Self

Meaning Unit	Paraphrase	Indicator(s)
	Jordan	
R: When you were in rehab what did you think of work, did you think you would work again?		
JD: No, I didn't have a clue. It was the furthest thing from my mind. I was too busy dealing with being able to take care of myself because nothing was working. Inside or outside my body, nothing was working. And that was, it was tough to deal with (417-422).	Was dealing with personal care and body wasn't working, this was tough to deal with.	Personal care requirements
Holding a pen, getting dressed. There are a lot of things that are affected, but you adapt really fast, you have to. It takes more effort but everything you do is an effort. When you get up every morning the effort starts (678-682).	Skills in ADL are affected but you have to adapt. The effort begins with every morning.	Skills in ADL Disability a challenge
	Joseph	
I can do most of my own dressing (52).	Mostly independent in dressing.	Skills in ADL
(Most uncomfortable thing at work is to have) accidents (bowel and bladder) ... I just go home, change if I have time and go back to work (811-825).	Bowel and bladder accidents are problematic - he'll go and change and come back to work.	Personal care requirements

Michael

Then I finished my grade 10 and then I went home and had pneumonia, bronchitis (551-553).	At completion of grade 10 returned home with pneumonia and bronchitis.	Health concerns
I didn't get into any detail (about toileting needs) with them (potential employer), just tell them how it is (1206-1207).	Doesn't give details just informs them.	Personal care requirements

Wayne

(With an incomplete injury) I have no pressure sores (41).	Incomplete injury; no pressure sores.	Health concerns

Ron

I would get them (the cab driver) to help me... Help me transfer and the cabs didn't want to take me (245-250).	Would get driver to help him transfer.	Physical limitations
(Uncomfortable situation at work) I had to blow a condom at work, you just kind of hide (532-1533).	Felt he wanted to hide when he blew a condom.	Personal care requirements

Fred

I had the orderly there at 5:30 in the morning to get me up, so he had to be up by 4:30 to get there. So by the end of the (work) day I was dead out of the water (301-304).	Had a long day as had to get care attendant to get him up at 5:30 a.m. to get to work on time.	Personal care requirements
And to do something (job related task) that would have taken me 5 minutes before I got hurt took over 2 hours (110-111).	Job related tasks took longer due to physical limitations.	Skills in ADL Physical limitations

(Following surgical removal of cysts) I was glad to hear I didn't have to stay in bed any longer. I said, heh, this is great. I can stay up in my chair more than three bloody hours. I was thinking how am I ever going to work in this state (384-387).	Questioned how he would work given that he was only able to stay in his chair for 3 hours after cyst removal.	Health concerns

The above thematic analysis seems to show that physiological changes that accompany severe spinal cord injury played an integral role in the return to work process for participants. Personal care requirements and physical limitations that are concomitant to the injury appear to be all-encompassing at the beginning of the re-entry process. For instance, Jordan states:

> it (work) was the furthest thing from my mind. I was too busy dealing with being able to take care of myself because nothing was working. Inside or outside my body, nothing was working (JD: 417-421)... You're learning your body all over again. You don't assume anything, you don't take anything for granted. A lot of it is timing (bowel and bladder care). Once you get your timing down it's okay. But all you need to do is screw up your timing once or twice, and all of a sudden you have to re-evaluate the whole situation (JD: 461-468).

In addition to factors of personal hygiene, routine activities of daily living seemed to be challenged by the onset of the physical disability. Fred's experience with activities of daily living while in the rehabilitation centre provide a good example of this.

> I gained most out of rehab...the OT convinced me to try cooking a meal and I was going to do bacon and pancakes. And to do something that would have taken me five minutes before I got hurt took over two hours. My frustration level was just absolutely through the roof (F: 107-112)... And then trying to clean up the meal. I gather the OT staff sat across the hall and could hear the crashing, swearing and (rude) language coming out (F: 114-116).

As participants evaluated their pre-injury vocational plans, consideration of the physical disability seemed apparent. All participants identified the need to choose an alternate career or modified work role as a loss in physical function was perceived as an obstacle to continuing in their previous position or chosen occupation. Michael reports " I had to readapt to what was available out there for me... because it's not very realistic for a quadriplegic pulling on a wrench" (M: 44-48). Likewise, Joseph said "it (current job) is totally different... (I do) office work now... It (the job change) had to happen because of the circumstances (onset of disability)" (J: 317-333). Jordan, Fred and Wayne also disclosed the need to change occupations apparently because of the physical ramifications of their spinal cord injuries. However, Wayne stayed working on his farm but altered his role to accommodate the physical disability. In his words, "I love agriculture, I mean I love the outdoors, I love animals, all that kind of thing...No, I don't get up on the tractor. That's the only part (of the job) I don't do" (W: 322-329).

With participants identifying the need to upgrade or develop employment skills the physical self also seemed to surface in the experience of retraining. Evidence is provided through an examination of both Ron and Fred's experience with the retraining process. Physical limitations seemed to present problems in terms of access to the training site and completion of tasks. For instance, Ron indicated that "they (cab drivers) had to take me up and down the stairs (six or seven steps) at Alberta College...twice a day" (R: 177-187). Furthermore, Fred states "given the physical limitations of my typing when I started school, it sure wasn't quick-back then it was quite slow, my living skills, ability to pull a sweater on, I was pretty new at the game" (F: 260-263).

Although daily living activities seemed to be notably affected in the early phases of re-entry, one's abilities apparently improved with time. This notion is supported by Jordan who says "like wheelchair management, getting stronger, doing more things, you could go more places, you could last a lot longer. You know you could get places you couldn't when you started rehab, or as you were half way through rehab" (JD: 445-450). Perhaps this is an indication of the accommodation of physical disability and development of stamina.

In reviewing participants experiences the mention of the physical self seemed to decrease as employment was secured. However, the initial post-injury employment position for Jordan seemed to involve a period of relearning and transition. He reports:

> well, the first one (job) was the toughest because that was when I was learning, finding out what I could do and what I couldn't do about everything; everything from bowel and bladder to skin. I didn't know if I was going to get pressure sores because I was at home for six months after getting out of hospital. So I hear all these stories about pressure sores and I was always watching my butt (JD: 60-68).

Fred shared a similar experience of this physical self when he spoke of his first job after the onset of his spinal cord injury.

> He (employer) did ask me if I thought my disability would pose any problems, and the only thing I said was, the only problem is that on Mondays and Thursdays I can't get here on time. Can I start at 9:00 or 9:30? Because with the bowel routine on Mondays and Thursdays I just couldn't get there that early. Oh, I didn't mention that in the initial interview (reflection). That was about half way through (the term position), because I was having the orderly get there at 5:30 in the morning to get me up,...so by the end of the day I was dead out of the water (F: 293-304).

Although concerns regarding the physical self were reported less frequently by the participants as they were further along in the re-entry process, Joseph and Ron mentioned that even after years of post - injury employment, bowel and bladder accidents can be bothersome. For example, when Joseph was asked about the most negative thing that had happened in his work he replied " (having) accidents (bowel and bladder) " (J: 812-813). Similarly, Ron reported that when you "blow a condom at work, you just kind of hide... It's a personal hygiene thing that anybody would have to deal with anyway" (R: 1532-1542). Thus, the physiological changes that accompany damage to the cervical spinal cord seemed to show their presence among the participants even in the later phases of re-entry.

The above narrative summary appears to support the proposal that the physical self, as defined by physiological changes that occur as a result of the spinal cord injury, played an important role in the return to work process for the participants. However, as will be demonstrated in the following pages, the social and psychological selves also seem to be facets that affect the process of re-entry.

Social self.

The social self seemed to be an essential component in the experience of re-entry to employment for the participants. Personal, peer and agency supports were influential in encouraging informants to continue with routine daily living activities that challenge persons with disabilities. Besides learning to cope with life as a person with a disability, re-entry to the workforce was a process supported by the social self. Guidance and compassion from peers and members of the helping profession formed an essential support system that could be relied on by the individual with a disability. Table 9 illustrates the thematic analysis of the social self while providing examples of the indicators that comprise this theme. As with the physical self, a full discussion of the theme is provided in the narrative section. This review illustrates the participants' reliance on the social self in the re-entry process.

Table 9
Subtheme: Social Self

Meaning Unit	Paraphrase	Indicator(s)
	Jordan	
Again, I had a lot of support from my family. I got lucky. I have to admit luck had a lot to do with it. Part of it was the support system. And part of it was how I got my support system together was just being with the right people at the right time. The people I met through the disabled community; people like yourself (426-431).	Was lucky to have a strong personal support system.	Personal support
	Support system formed.	Personal support
	Met people in disabled community.	Peer support
	Support from people like you.	Agency support
I had someone there (coworker) who is now a good friend who helped me through the first couple of three weeks (566-568).	Coworker helped him initially in his job.	Peer support
	Joseph	
J: Yeah, friends sort of nudged me into this work. R: Okay, disabled friends or non-disabled friends? J: Disabled (383-387).	Disabled friends encouraged him into current line of work.	Peer support
A lot of my friends told me I was better off to (go to school) (140-142).	Friends advised him he would benefit from upgrading.	Peer support
Other quads... that's what they did with me, counsel (415-426).	Quads counselled him.	Peer support

Michael

So we (friend with cerebral palsy and Michael) went to college together (it helped) both of us (613-629).	Michael and a friend went to college together.	Peer support
I give quite a bit of credit where I'm at in terms of just some background (for the interview) from Ron (756-758).	Gives credit to a peer who prepared him for interview.	Peer support

Wayne

Everybody (his family) we're all together, we're all partners (on the farm) (166).	All partners on the farm.	Personal support
Well they (family) were receptive (to his return to the farm) to it because... they wanted to see me do it (172-174).	Family was receptive to his return to the farm.	Personal support

Ron

In those days there wasn't a lot of support. You know the counsellors were regular counsellors for all the population in the school (925-928).	No access to specialized support/counselling	Agency support (lack of)

Fred

The worst or second worst experience was the strain of being at home, trying to make sure that my care was being organized. In realizing the strain on my father and stepmother (217-220).	Bad experience was strain on his Dad and Stepmom in organizing care.	Personal support
I got through it (the course), I think basically because the other guys in my group were really with it (339-340).	Others in his group helped him to get through the course.	Peer support

As indicated in the theme construction of the 'self in context' the social self is comprised of personal, peer and agency supports that were available to the participants of this study. This support network appeared to provide encouragement to the participants as they coped with everyday living and the re-entry to employment process. All participants, except for Ron, seemed to have a spectrum of supports available to them as they re-entered the labour force.

Perhaps an indication of the time in which he was injured (over 28 years ago), Ron could be regarded as a pioneer to labour force access by a person with a disability. Ron points out " I don't recall anybody who had a physical disability that worked" (R: 160-161). It follows then, that Ron would have few supports available to him as he embarked on the process of re-entry. Ron echoes this notion when he relays his experience of attending university. "In those days there wasn't a lot of support. You know the counsellors were regular counsellors for all the population in the school" (R: 925-928). Hence, additional context is brought to Ron's experience when it is realized that he coped with his physical disability with little access to a network of supports.

As with Ron, Joseph, Michael and Wayne also relocated from a rural community to an urban centre with the onset of their spinal cord injuries. Joseph and Michael recall peer support as an essential element in the return to work process. When Joseph was reconsidering his career goals he mentioned that friends (with disabilities) "sort of nudged me into this work" (J: 383). Michael's peer support seems more intimate as he credits two friends with disabilities for their support and encouragement in attending college and succeeding in work. In his words "so we (friend with cerebral palsy and Michael) went to college together (it helped) both of us (M: 613-629)...I give quite a bit of credit to where I'm at, in terms of just some background (for the interview), to Ron" (M: 756-758). Michael and Joseph however do not refer to family members when discussing their employment experiences. In contrast, the role of the family, as indicated by personal support, seemed to be a powerful influence in Wayne's experience of re-entering the labour force. Having worked on a fourth generation farm Wayne's family "were receptive (to his return to the farm) to it because... they wanted to see me do it" (W: 172-174).

Unlike Ron, who had few supports, and Joseph, Michael and Wayne who reported using personal or peer supports exclusively, Jordan and Fred seemed to draw on all forms of the social self in the re-entry process. Jordan summarizes his social self in the following excerpt.

> Again, I had a lot of support from my family. I got lucky. I have to admit, luck had a lot to do with it. Part of it was the support system. And part of it was how I got my support system together; just being with the right people at the right time. The people I met through the disabled community; people like yourself (a counsellor) (JD: 426-431).

It is apparent that Jordan has drawn on family (personal), persons with disabilities (peers) and the interviewer (agency) for support. Similarly, Fred utilized all forms of the social self that were identified in this study. The following example supports Fred's reliance on the social self. Personal support is demonstrated through:

> I think I get a lot of myself from my family. My Dad was a perfectionist, he sacrificed things until he just about died. I grew up around it. My brother drove me crazy because he's full of self confidence, he's successful in everything he does to the point of winning the Heritage Trust Fund Scholarship, he's so amazing. He's travelled around the world with his (job), he's always done well. He looks at me and thinks of how successful I am. I don't know why. His masters thesis is dedicated to me (he cries). We tend to follow by example-like it was an unspoken thing (F: 532-541).

An example of peer support is, "I got through it (the course), I think basically because the other guys in my group were really with it" (F:339-340), and agency support; "I know I haven't talked to anyone in a long time. I like talking to you - I don't think you have to have a disability to understand. Levels of understanding are different" (F:566-568).

In summary, the social self was comprised of a network of personal, peer and agency supports that were relied on to a variable degree by the participants of this study. Through the above examples, it was demonstrated that the social self played a moderating role as participants passed through the phases of the re-entry process.

Psychological self.

Although the physical and social facets of the self played important roles in the re-entry process, coping with the spinal cord injury on a psychological level seemed to make the most significant contribution to the experience. With variance in the frequency and degree of contribution, all participants mentioned the process of adjustment to disability. Table 10 is an example of how the analysis of the data was done whereas the importance of the psychological self in the process of re-entry is demonstrated through narrative descriptions provided by the participants.

Table 10
Subtheme: Psychological Self

Meaning Unit	Paraphrase	Indicator(s)
	Jordan	
It (the disability) makes some things harder. It gets frustrating sometimes. It gets in the way (19-20).	Disability makes some things harder to do. Disability is frustrating and gets in the way.	Coping with disability
And that (dealing with the disability) was, it was tough to deal with. I tried to keep it to myself a lot of times but sometimes it didn't work out that way (421-423).	Was dealing with disability and this was difficult; would try to keep it to himself.	Psychological state
	Joseph	
...It takes a good five to six years just to get readjusted (877-878).	Takes 5-6 years to adjust to disability.	Psychological state/coping with disability
(Brought to urban environment for treatment) yes, for two years, quite a shock (727).	Encountered a shock when in the city for treatment.	Psychological state
	Michael	
And there were many times that I thought to hell with it, I'm sick of school and I don't want anymore correspondence or stuff like that (888-890).	Thought of quitting school, when he was tired of it.	Psychological state
And I did feel uncomfortable in saying things like that (his toileting requirements)... but it's not one of those things you can hide (1186-1188).	Feel uncomfortable talking about toileting needs but can't hide it.	Coping with disability

Wayne

I finally snapped out of things (depression). You say, okay do you want to sit back and be nothing and do nothing and you know, just live for the day, or do you want to make something of yourself (151-154).	Snapped out of depression and assessed whether he wanted to sit back and do nothing or make something of himself.	Psychological shift
They (newly injured persons) go through this depression and they come out of it. But it seems to take them longer and longer to come out of it (931-934).	Understands that the newly injured go through an initial period of depression and then come out of it. For some it takes longer to come out of depression.	Coping with disability

Ron

I lost a lot of self-confidence (when unemployed). I didn't know if I really could... (do the job) (764-765).	With loss of self-confidence he didn't think he could do it.	Psychological state
It (sales job) knocked down my self-esteem (769).	Job knocked down self-esteem.	Psychological state

Fred

I was terribly angry about the injury, u, I was a rebel basically telling Dr. X where to go. Telling half the nursing staff where to go, the only people I really got along with were the physio's and OT's and they caused the least misery (102-105). R: You seem quite hard on yourself.	Was angry about his injury and took it out on the hospital staff.	Psychological state

F: I know I am (tearful, then sobbing). I feel like I have been living on the edge for so long (voice cracks, very tearful). I have so many personal things to deal with. I've come so close to losing it many times. I'm right there right now (tears rolling down his face) (520-525).	Is hard on himself, he says he is on the edge; he has many things to deal with.	Coping with disability Depth of emotion

As with the physical and social components of the self, issues seemingly related to coping with physical disability were disclosed by the participants. This facet of the self has been titled the psychological self. Variance existed among participants in how often and to what degree this issue was raised in the interviews and appeared in the data. Thus, each participant demonstrated the individuality of his experience. As Joseph confirms "they (each individual) have to adjust and go through their own process to get to where they are going" (J: 790-791). A review of the psychological self further supports the unique nature of participants experiences.

The range of reaction to disability is illustrated through excerpts taken from the interview transcripts of Fred and Joseph. Fred, for example, speaks often about coping with his spinal cord injury and does so with intensity. For him the facet of the psychological self seemed paramount to his experiences. In summary of this theme Fred states :

> I was scared I'd come on stream (begin his job), get going, and then I'd fail. Again, my supreme lack of self confidence rearing its ugly head (F: 408-410)...My self-confidence impacts the whole employment thing and my life (tearful) (F: 589-590).

In contrast, other participants, such as Joseph (who mentioned it the least often and with little emotion), presented the psychological self in a matter of fact style with little elaboration. "It takes a good five or six years just to get readjusted" (J: 877-878). As well as differences in frequency and emotion, the participants showed heterogeneity of the psychological self among the phases of the re-entry process. For example, in a sales job Ron's psychological status seemed threatened. "It (the job) knocked down my self esteem" (R: 769). However at a later time in the re-entry process his confidence shows. "I knew I could do this job, I was more than capable of doing this job" (R: 807-809).

In the initial phase of re-entry, which appeared to involve the evaluation of established or planned career goals, participants seemed to indicate a process of coping. For Ron, a period of mourning seemed to occur. "(Initially) when I was injured I think I was grieving, there was a lot of grief" (R: *62-64). In contrast to Ron's sense of sadness, Fred seemed to express anger and frustration with his situation. Studying to be a chef prior to his diving accident, Fred expressed his frustration when describing a work related task that he once performed with ease. He states " ... because I can't demonstrate, I can't hold that damn knife! (frustration)" (F: 50-51). Jordan also declares his frustration with the physical limitations that have been imposed as a result of his spinal cord injury. "It (the disability) does affect my ability to perform as well as I'd like to. It makes some things harder. It gets frustrating sometimes. It gets in the way" (JD: 18-20).

Unlike Ron, Fred and Jordan who describe the early phase of re-entry with sensitivity, Michael, who had no pre-injury employment history, seems to describe his experience with the absence of emotional undertones. He states quite simply "I just had to readapt... I think realistically I had to make some alternative (career choice)" (M: 44-56). Wayne and Joseph also express the coping process in a straight-forward manner. Joseph's approach is indicated in the opening paragraph of this section, and Wayne states that "life takes a real twist... and a big change. You got to go through the depression stage (before considering employment) and that probably took two to three years of my life" (W: 129-133). Interestingly, Wayne and Joseph also indicated that career planning did not occur until completion of the 'depression' or 'adjustment' period.

When participants engaged in developing new or complementary skills that would enhance their marketability in the labour force, the psychological self entered into their experiences. Although not all participants disclosed such indicators in this phase of re-entry, it seemed especially important for Ron and Fred who pursued university education.

As was mentioned in the preceding discussion of phase two-developing new or complementary skills, the experiences of Ron and Fred differed. Fred's challenge with retraining was mostly with the curriculum whereas Ron's focussed on accessibility and transportation. An examination of the psychological self parallels this distinction. For example Fred states:

> I remember with our final project (in a computer design course), that we (his study group) had been working on all year - designing this thing - mine didn't work doing the final test and everybody in the class was there. I was so disappointed, I was embarrassed, ashamed. It was my fault it didn't work. I wanted to crawl into a hole and die, right there and then (F; 350-355)... I remember going over to the outpatient burn clinic (he was being treated for a severe finger burn), I never said a word to the physio but she knew I was incredibly upset, and finally she said "what's the matter?" I had kept her informed of what had been going on. I said our project didn't work. I broke down (tearful). I totally lost it, I was blubbering away (F: 361-366).

Whereas, Ron seems to stress aspects of coping in terms of issues of inaccessibility and lack of appropriate transportation. When speaking about attendance at the university, Ron mentions:

> ... when I went from the Tory building into the Tory lecture theatre there were two sets of stairs. One was five stairs and the other was three. I used to have to always get some students to help me down the stairs... There was a washroom in Tory that was accessible, and I had to have keys for all the elevators. It was tough but I didn't know

> any better (R: 300-316)... You know I look back and wonder how I managed. But at that time I didn't think it was that hard (R: 342-344).

The above quotation seems to reflect two important ingredients. Firstly, the lack of accessibility and not knowing any better seem to be elements of the time in which Ron entered into retraining. Perhaps with few expectations that the environment should accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities, disappointment is minimized when these concessions are absent. And secondly, the above statement seems to support the claim of diversity in the strength of the psychological self. Ron seems to approach the challenges of retraining from a practical perspective whereas Fred's reaction entails emotionality.

The prevalence of the psychological self also seemed apparent in phases three and four when participants began searching for and gaining employment. Once again, the role of the psychological self varied among the participants. Ron, Fred and Jordan seem to place greater emphasis on this facet of the self than perhaps Wayne, Michael and Joseph did. For example, Ron states " I lost a lot of self-confidence (when not employed). I didn't know if I really could (do the job)" (R: 764-765). Fred echoes Ron's questioning of oneself when he discloses " I was terribly worried that I wouldn't be able to cut it " (F: 407).

When Jordan secured his first post-injury employment position he too doubted himself but also brought another perspective to the psychological self. In Jordan's words:

> I didn't know what to expect, I didn't know what I could do. Mind you I was working in a group that was all disabled, everybody had a disability of some sort. Well, a bonus, but it was tough in itself because at that time I didn't want to be around other people that were disabled. It was one thing in the hospital but in a work environment you want to be as close to normal so you have something, a measuring stick, to judge yourself by (J: 81-90).

This desire to achieve normality is further discussed in the following section of this chapter. However, it also serves to inform the reader that coping with physical disability seems to be an integral aspect of the re-entry process.

It must also be recognized that coping with the disability in every regard (physical limitations, levels of self-esteem, changing abilities, availability of supports, etc.) seems to require re-evaluating. For example, Fred, a computer analyst employed in his current position for four years, states:

> (some days at work) I'm totally overwhelmed, in over my head and I don't know what I'm really doing here and it's all just smoke and mirrors and everything is just going to fall apart like a house of cards. I think the biggest damn thing is still my lack of confidence,... and that's a continuing ongoing thing... And I'll struggle with it to the day I die (F: 450-472).

Ron also indicates the assessment of the psychological self during a period of post-injury unemployment.

> Being without a job was tough, because my whole self-esteem was based on my work and I couldn't find a job. I applied everywhere and never found anything. I had to go to a psychiatrist because I was getting really depressed... Even the year of my injury wasn't the depression that I felt that year (R: 1354-1358).

The evaluation and re-evaluation of the psychological self while coping with life as a person with a disability seems to be an inherent feature of the return to work process.

In summary, participants incorporated features of the psychological self to varying degrees as they shared their re-entry experiences. Fred, Ron, and Jordan expressed notions of coping with disability with great intensity whereas Michael, Joseph and Wayne discussed the matter in absolute terms. Although the psychological self was determined to be unique to each individual the following quotation captures the essence of this component of the self. Jordan states:

> Your personal baggage becomes amplified. Everything else (life's challenges) becomes a much bigger burden, it's so much harder to deal with because you don't have the physical, mental and spiritual strength to deal with it. (JD: 695-700).

Factors of the Workplace

Participant interviews indicated that factors of the workplace including the prevalence of temporary employment, the need for flexible work schedules, the presence of persons with disabilities in the place of employment, the availability of technical aids and modifications to the worksite and a focus on ability rather than disability seemed to be fundamental elements in the employment experiences following the onset of quadriplegia. These subthemes provide important details to understanding the experience of re-entry to employment for the research participants. The following section illustrates the development of thematic clusters from the identification of tags.

Theme Construction: Factors of the Workplace

Descriptive Cluster/Subtheme	Indicator(s)
Temporary Employment	- job placement project - contract position - temporary employment - question of job security

Flexible Work Schedule	- flexible employment - length of workday
Presence of Disabled Workers In Employment	- affiliation with other disabled persons
Aids, Modifications	- computer as a tool - worksite modifications - accessibility
Focus on Ability/Equality	- self expectation of equality - employer expectations - irrelevance of disability - equality - focus on ability

Temporary employment.

All participants informed the interviewer that at one time or another in their careers they were employed in positions created out of project funding. Therefore, with funding over a set period of time the job positions held by research participants were often temporary in nature. As is shown in the following synopsis of theme development (table 11) and the narrative section that follows, questions of job security arise under of auspices of temporary employment.

Table 11
Subtheme: Temporary Employment

Participant	Meaning Unit	Paraphrase	Tag
Jordan	You know it was kind of like well if I wasn't disabled I don't know if I'd have this job. And that wasn't hard to figure out (249-251).	If I wasn't disabled I may not have the job.	Job Placement Project
Michael	It (the job) was a special project through the government... (317).	Hired on a special government project.	Job Placement Project
Fred	Well I'm on contract. I'm on a yearly contract and yeah I'm always concerned that I do well enough or whatever so that the contract is renewed and that the funding for (his employment) continues. If the Provincial Government pulls the funding... there goes my job (98-103).	On contract he is concerned that his job will continue.	Temporary Employment
Jordan	With (Company X), my contract had expired, they had extended it, then there was a hiring freeze and I was let go. They had extended my contract another six months and then after two months they said sorry we can't keep you. We'd like to but we can't (310-315).	After an extension of the expired contract, was let go in spite of company wanting to keep him.	Temporary Employment/Question of Job Security

When the subtheme of temporary employment was examined, I found that job placement projects and contract positions that were often supported by grant funding seemed to allow the participants to enter into the labour market. However, the continuance of funding also seemed to raise questions of job security with some of the participants.

With a post-injury employment history of contract work, Jordan indicates that special project funding fostered his entry into the labour force.

> I knew that he (the employer) was kind of, he had his back against the wall, he had to meet some requirements (of the project funding). You know you have to hire so many disabled people (JD: 218-221)... You know it was kind of

> like well if I wasn't disabled I don't know if I'd have this job. And that wasn't hard to figure out (JD: 249-252).

Michael also reports the way in which project funding facilitated his entry into the labour market. "(The position was funded by) Canadian Job Strategies (M: 436)... I had to have some form of disability as well as being just out of school... you know otherwise I wouldn't be working" (M: 343-350).

Work placements and probationary periods seemed to allow both Joseph and Wayne the opportunity to demonstrate their employment skills. Joseph indicated that work placements seemed beneficial for both the worker with a disability and the prospective employer. He states " I think it is a better way for everybody... Well it is sort of a trial, if it does or does not work out, (the employer and employee know) it was just a placement" (J: 564-574). Wayne indicates further that probation is " a trial part, I think you can prove to your employer that you can do the position, that you can do the job then they really will take more notice of you and hire you permanently" (W: *326-329).

The insecurity of temporary employment (through job placements, time funded positions and contract work) also surfaced as participants shared their experiences of returning to employment after spinal cord injury. Summer employment and/or project funded positions raised questions of job security for Ron. For example, he states:

> I suppose I did (experience temporary employment). Summer employment was temporary. And then I worked with the XX Society, that was temporary in a way, there was no secure (ongoing) funding for it so I guess when you work for a non-profit sometimes, especially the smaller ones you find that funding is not all that secure (R: *196-204).

Concurrently, Fred notes this general lack of job security in his current employment position.

> Well, I'm on contract. I'm on a yearly contract and yeah I'm always concerned that I do well enough or whatever so that the contract is renewed and that the funding for XXX continues. And if the Provincial Government pulls the funding from XXX then there goes my job (F: 98-103).

The withdrawal of funding and cessation of a contract is further demonstrated by Jordan who has worked exclusively on contract since re-entering the workforce.

> With YY, my contract had expired, they had extended it, then there was a hiring freeze and I was let go. They had extended my contract another six months and then after two months they said sorry we can't keep you. We'd like to but we can't (JD: 310-315).

In summary, although temporary employment apparently facilitated access to the labour market it also raised issues of job security for the participants.

Flexible work schedule.

The flexible work schedule is another component of employment among the participants. Flexibility seems important for the accommodation of personal care requirements, staffing (for nursing care assistance in the home) needs, and the completion of job tasks. The following table (table 12) and narrative review serve to demonstrate the apparent requirement of flex-time in the career development of the participants in this study.

Table 12
Subtheme: Flexible Work Schedule

Participant	Meaning Unit	Paraphrase	Tag
Michael	My experiences with my past (boss) - many times I was there (at work) till 11 o'clock at night working on things cause I had to get it done (690-693).	Worked many times until 11 p.m. to meet work deadlines.	Length of work day
Fred	And I said to him this (getting up at 5:30 in the morning to be at work for 8:30) is really tough. Can I come in later and make up the time? I did explain it (personal care requirements for the morning routine) to him but I don't remember to what detail I gave him. One thing I came to realize and appreciate was that those in the Department can be much more flexible than the real world, you know people are a lot more open to things that are different than say the government of Alberta might be (309-315).	Asked for a flexible work schedule as he needed to deal with his personal care or his day was long.	Length of work day
		Found his employer to be more flexible than those in the real world.	Flexible employment
Wayne	If they (person with SCI) don't work out at 40 hours a week, lets try part-time where you come in at 10 or 11 o'clock in the morning, let's say for the rest of the day you know things work, things can work but if an employer wants to they can do that sort of thing (517-520).	If unable to work a regular 40 hour work week they should try part-time or come in later in the day.	Flexible employment
		An altered schedule can work if an employer wants to make the changes.	

Flexibility seemed to be a characteristic of the work situation among participants. Whether extended hours were worked in order to maintain job performance or the work day modified to accommodate personal care requirements, participants seemed not to work a routine nine-to-five day. Wayne's explanation of his work schedule clearly supports this. He states:

> I guess that's what makes my job good because I have flexible work hours. Well I just don't start at 8:30 and go to 4:30, but my requirement is to put in 32 hours a week. So there are some weeks where I put in more, some weeks I put in less but it all balances out. I start at different times every day, depending on what I am doing. If there is something that I have to do for the farm, then I stay back (at home) an hour or so, and I deal with it. And if I don't well then I'm there earlier, I'm there (at work) at 9:30 usually (W: 529-546).

Therefore, the flexibility of his position seems to accommodate Wayne's second job on the farm.

Rather than Jordan, Joseph, Ron and Fred utilizing a flexible work schedule to furnish an alternate employment position, they seemed to rely on it for the accommodation of their physical disabilities. Jordan reports:

> Well for me to have every second Friday off, that's really important to me. That is available to me because I have a difficult time working five days a week and I don't work an eight hour day. There will be days I work you know my seven hours and then I'll work ten or twelve hour days. It depends on what the need is... and how I feel (JD: 257-271).

For Joseph and Ron, the flexibility in their work schedule allows them to discretely deal with personal hygiene difficulties that may occur. Joseph states " (I) just go home, change if I have time and go back to work" (J: 824-825). Similarly, Ron indicates that bladder accidents require that he leave work and return when he has dealt with this issue of personal care (R: 1537-1538). With Fred, flexibility seems to ensure that his personal care requirements can be adequately met. In his first post-injury job Fred was getting up (with the assistance of a residential aide) at 5:30 a.m. to ensure that he could start work at 8:30 a.m. However, after several exhausting weeks he asked his employer "can I be a little bit flexible and start at 9:00 a.m. so that I have time for the morning routine?" (F: *191-193). Such flexibility was granted.

In addition to flexibility in the work place as demonstrated through an altered work schedule, one participant mentioned that on occasion he worked long hours in order to meet work deadlines. Accurately captured in Michael's expression of his employment experiences he states "... many times I was there till eleven o'clock at night working on things cause I had to get it done for a deadline... You know things that couldn't get done during the day. You know but that's just the way it went" (M: 695-698).

In conclusion, it appears as if the participants found it beneficial to be employed in a work environment that allowed for flexibility in the work schedule. Whether flexibility was essential to accommodate personal care needs, to ensure balance so that an alternate position could be maintained or so that one could complete work related tasks, support was apparent for this element of the workplace.

Presence of disabled workers in employment.

Yet another common feature of the workplace for the participants of this study was the affiliation with others persons with disabilities through the completion of one's employment duties. Participants work or have worked in agencies that serve the needs of persons with disabilities, have (or had) disabled coworkers, or both. Thematic development of factors of the work place are illustrated below (table 13). An elaboration of this theme is provided in the narrative that follows.

Table 13
Subtheme: Presence of Disabled Persons In Employment

Participant	Meaning Unit	Paraphrase	Tag
Jordan	Mind you I was working in a group that was all disabled, everybody had a disability of some sort (83-85).	Was working with employees with disabilities.	Affiliation with other disabled persons.
Wayne	I guess when I first came (to work here) it was not uncommon to see somebody (coworkers) in a wheelchair or someone with a disability (474-477).	At work it was not uncommon to have coworkers with disabilities.	Affiliation with other disabled persons.
Ron	(Job duties...) I would go around with this blind fellow and we sold advertising and that was our summer job. It was a real gas because we had total freedom (448-451).	Had fun in this summer job as he sold advertising with a blind fellow.	Affiliation with other disabled persons.
Joseph	There was one other disabled employee in the company (635).	One other person with a disability was employed at the firm.	Affiliation with other disabled persons.

As stated at the onset of this section of chapter four, participants have been affiliated with other persons with disabilities in the course of the re-entry process. Wayne, Ron, Michael and Fred are currently employed in agencies that serve the disabled community whereas Jordan and Joseph are not. However, their employment histories indicate that they have had coworkers with disabilities at one time or another.

The significance of being affiliated with other persons with disabilities is captured most candidly by Wayne, Fred and Jordan. Wayne and Fred seem to surmise that such an affiliation seemed to be beneficial to the re-entry process. Fred states " no one else here on staff has a disability (but) they (the employer) are obviously aware of disabilities as down in the (work) room there are people with mental and physical disabilities" (F: 483-498). Wayne takes this further by indicating that:

> when I first came (to work) there it was not uncommon to see somebody in a wheelchair or somebody with a disability. So that was a big help. I can bet you dollars to donuts that if I rolled in to another place where there wasn't a person with a disability...they would think what's this guy doing here?" (W: 474-483).

Jordan's impression of being affiliated with other persons with disabilities in the workplace seemed less definitive as he apparently views this issue as a mixed blessing. He states:

> mind you I was working (first job) in a group that was all disabled, everybody had a disability of some sort. Well, a bonus, but it was tough in itself because at that time I didn't want to be around other people that were disabled. It was one thing in the hospital but in a work environment you want to be as close to normal so you have something, a measuring stick, to judge yourself by (JD: 81-90)... But I learned a lot there, I learned a tremendous amount, I learned a lot about myself, about government programs, I learned a lot about my disability, I learned a lot about other people's disabilities, I learned a lot about working with other people with disabilities (JD: 115-121).

Thus, perhaps for Jordan having coworkers exclusively with disabilities allowed him to initially feel comfortable in the work environment. At the same time, the circumstance seemed to motivate him to expand his options for employment into the greater market place.

Aids and modifications.

In addition to factors of the workplace such as the provision for a flexible work schedule, temporary employment and a work role that entails the interaction with other persons with disabilities, research participants mentioned the need for worksite modifications (although this was perceived as a relatively minor inconvenience) and the utilization of aids in the completion of work related tasks.

Table 14
Subtheme: Aids and Modifications

Participant	Meaning Unit	Paraphrase	Tag
Ron	It's (a computer) a tool. It's like writing paper and everything else (880-884).	Uses computer as a tool; similarity to writing paper.	Computer as a tool
Wayne	The only technical aid I have is a computer (422).	Only technical aid used in his job is a computer.	Computer as a tool
Fred	The notion of computers and being able to communicate and get it to do what I wanted it to opened up possibilities (80-82).	Computer opened up possibilities for communication.	Computer as a tool
Michael	(Bathroom requirements) Well just big enough to get into the bathroom and close it, close the door behind (you) (1203-1204).	Need a bathroom stall big enough to get into and close the door.	Accessibility
Michael	One thing I got the maintenance guy to do is put a lever handle on my office door (177-178).	Maintenance installed lever handle.	Worksite modifications

Aids and modifications are factors of the work place that participants require in order that they may perform job related tasks to the best of their abilities. Although I anticipated the work environment to have been modified extensively to accommodate the physical disability, and for participants to rely heavily on expertly constructed assistive devices this seemed not to be the case. Instead, participants seemed to perceive aids as tools rather than necessities for task completion and work site changes seemed relatively minor.

With regard to technical aids, Michael, Ron, Wayne and Joseph did not use specialized equipment. Rather, as Wayne states:

> basically a lot of times when there is something that has to be done and if you need something to do it, you're not going to run to a store or to whereever to get a technical aid, you're just going to grab something and use something that works. If it works, great, use it. Yeah, it's more practical. It's easier for me to throw the pen away (types with it) that I'm using or pencil that I'm using rather than go and get special appliances made and fitted one or twice and that sort of thing. It's too much of a hassle (W: 454-465).

Referring to typing on a computer, other participants also indicated that they use computers in their work. However, Ron appears to conclude that a computer is no longer considered a technical aide. He points out "I use a computer, I'm starting to think that most people in their work place have a computer, I can do things faster. Keep record of events" (R: 877-899). Joseph seems to concur with Ron, but Fred apparently places greater emphasis on this devise. He declares "those things (typing, using a computer) ended up being my communication with the world" (F: 123-125). It is important to note that Jordan and Joseph also utilize a computer in their day to day work tasks.

As with the use of technical aides, work site modifications did not seem to present insurmountable barriers to accessing the labour force. Participants seemed to place greater emphasis on accessibility in the earlier phases of re-entry (as demonstrated by the examination of the physical self) as when describing work site modifications that were required they seemed to mention relatively minor changes. Michael, for example, states "one thing I got the maintenance guy to do was put a lever handle on my office door " (M: 177-178). Similarly Joseph says his work place is "ramped all over the place " (J: 209-210). Perhaps this indicates adequate worksite accessibility and hence the less frequent reference to it by participants as they expressed their experiences of the return to work process.

Focus on ability/equality.

The final facet of the workplace mentioned by the participants was to focus on the ability of the individual and not the disability. The data seemed to indicate that the informants strive for normalcy and maintain employment based on their skills and abilities. Table 15 provides examples of how this theme was constructed and the narrative summary demonstrates its significance.

Table 15
Subtheme - Focus on Ability/Equality

Participant	Meaning Unit	Paraphrase	Tag
Michael	My thinking is like this, I'm there to do a job and I expect people to treat me the same way if somebody is able-bodied doing it (678-681).	He is there to do a job and expects to be treated the same way an able-bodied person would be.	Self Expectation of Equality
Jordan	(Would advise an employer and an employee.) Don't focus on disability (734).	Would tell employees and employers not to focus on disability.	Focus on Ability
Wayne	If people see the chair, they think, oh my God, this guy can only do so much you know, he's not very responsible, forget that. This guy can probably do just as much as anybody else or probably do better than some of the workers you've just hired (709-715).	Employer should look at ability and not physical disability. Persons with disabilities are just as capable as anyone else.	Focus on Ability
Fred	I think it's just a matter of looking beyond the disability, try not to look back. Look at the person, not the chair or the crutches (*297-300).	Look at the person and not the disability.	Focus on Ability
Ron	You don't want the employer to feel sorry for you (1428-1429).	Don't want the employers sympathy.	Focus on Ability
Michael	People are people (750).	Equality-people are people.	Focus on Ability
Michael	We're all human (1078).	We're all human.	Focus on Ability

Thematic analysis of the data suggests that as well as participants recognizing that employers expect job duties to be performed at a high standard, personal expectations of performance are also apparent. With participants identifying the importance of ability rather than focusing on disability in the workplace, they seem to strive for equality. To summarize this sub-theme, I turn to the words of Michael. Quite simply, he declares "people are people" (M: 750).

As was reported in the examination of the psychological self, participants showed concern and sometimes doubted (Fred) their abilities to manage the duties of their job positions. As Jordan states "I was more concerned with my ability to do the job. Not my disability or how I looked, but can I do this. Do I have enough experience, knowledge, enough smarts - that was my concern" (JD: 561-565). Ron and Fred seem to take responsibility for demonstrating their work related abilities. Fred states "by having the skills you've shown them that you can do the job" (F: 228-229). And Ron strengthens the notion of taking personal responsibility for demonstrating one's abilities. Ron suggests "they (employer) may be apprehensive about my having a disability but most people once they get to know you as a person overlook that. And I think it's totally on me, the onus is on me to show people that disability is only a minor thing in my life, there's much more than that" (R: 1047-1055).

When participants were asked how they might advise a perspective employer who was considering hiring a person with a disability issues of equal treatment and focussing on ability seemed to inundate their responses. With regard to equality in the workplace, Michael states:

> my thinking is that I'm there to do a job and I expect people to treat me the same if somebody is able-bodied doing it (M: 678-681). ...I don't expect people to treat me any differently (M: 701)... Don't treat them different than somebody without a disability... Just talk to them like you would talk to any other employee (M: 862-867).

And in focusing on ability Fred candidly professes "God, I think it's just a matter of looking beyond the disability, try not to look back. Look at the person, not the chair or the crutches" (F: 298-300). Stated similarly, Jordan says "don't focus on disability" (JD: 734) and Wayne elaborates on this sentiment, "forget the chair, forget the wheelchair, forget the disability. Just look at the skills, and what the person can do" (W: 616-620). Thus, a focus on ability rather than disability seems to be an essential factor of the workplace.

In conclusion, participants mentioned several factors of the workplace when sharing their experiences of returning to competitive employment after severe spinal cord injury. The participation in temporary employment as a result of contract work or positions funded for set time periods seemed to raise questions of job security yet also appeared to facilitate the re-entry process. Flexibility in the work place seemed to allow participants to arrange personal care in a non-descriptive manner around their work schedules.

Other factors of the workplace mentioned by participants were the presence of workers with disabilities in employment, the need for aids and modifications to the worksite and the importance of focussing on ability rather than disability. Participants seemed to minimize their need for technical aides and modifications and it was suggested that this might be linked to the presence of other persons with disabilities in the workplace or adequately wheelchair accessible work sites. Finally, participants seemed to place substantial emphasis on focussing on ability and not disability in the re-entry process.

Attributes of the Successfully Employed

In the examination of labour force entry and maintenance of employment, I noticed that certain personal attributes of the participants appeared to be critical for career success. Qualities such as self-determination, dedication and loyalty are inherent among this group of research informants. For instance, Wayne presents the view that if you are an employed worker with quadriplegic injuries you might have to take on extra responsibilities to prove dedication to your job. He suggests "volunteering to be the last guy out and locking up" at the end of the work day (W: 683-691). Likewise, Fred's self-determination is apparent when he says "If you're not determined to keep going (with the job search) and fight the obstacles then you're not going to do it so you have to be determined. Sometimes it's awfully hard to keep that fight up" (F: 285-288).

The above examples of attributes of the successfully employed participants clearly separate into two categories. In the quotation provided by Wayne, I sense an action of the participant taking the initiative. Thus, he is 'doing'. In contrast, Fred describes a state of 'being' by informing the reader that his peers must be determined while engaging in the re-entry process. When I examined the data of all participants a similar separation seemed to occur. As with the other themes, I paraphrased meaning units, tagged them and grouped like tags. As a result of this analytical process the following classification occurred.

Theme Construction: The Attributes of the Successfully Employed

Descriptive Cluster	Indicators
Doing	- taking the initiative - setting goals - striving for normalcy - persisting - presenting professionally
Being	- dedicated/committed - determined - responsible - confident or not

Taking a closer look at the theme of attributes of the successfully employed the division yet close relationship between 'doing' and 'being' is further demonstrated. As stated previously, doing entails activities that participants engaged in while attempting to return to employment following spinal cord injury. This discussion begins with the need to set goals. As Ron indicates "I would tell them (a peer embarking on the re-entry process) that number one you have to start setting goals and two you have to start believing that you have the capability of doing it (the job)" (R: 1358-1361).

Once goals are set it seemed that presenting professionally and striving for normalcy were important to the participants. Jordan seemed to emphasize normalcy when he says:

> especially now, I have to be selective in the kind of clothes I wear because doing up buttons is a lot harder to do and takes a lot longer. And I used to wear dress pants. I don't feel too comfortable making all these adaptations; straps and velcro. I have yet to see someone who looks like they're wearing a normal pair of slacks that have been adapted for someone in a wheelchair. You know, with zippers down the side. I don't wear a leg bag so I don't have that problem. You know I just want to wear normal clothes... Ya, (I want to be) as close to a normal guy as I can be. (JD: 715-728).

And Ron indicates the apparent importance of presenting professionally in the interview. He points out:

> I think it's very important, I hate to say this, but it's how you present yourself in the interview. If you're going for a job in an office don't go in wearing blue jeans and a toque on your head. It's not going to go over. You can say it doesn't affect the way I'm going to do the job, but anybody in the interview doesn't know that, all they see is the person that's before them. (R: 1396-1403).

Furthermore, Michael appeared to presume that once employed professional presentation continues to be an issue. He states firmly:

> even when you are working and you are going out to the job site or you are going to meetings and stuff like that you get two people that are dressed, one professionally and one wearing sweats, usually the people will talk to the person who is dressed professionally. Then you know they will talk to you instead of down to you. ...To me if I look good I'll feel good. (M: 920-933).

In addition to actions that entailed developing career goals and presenting oneself in a particular way, it appeared as if in adverse conditions persistence was essential. Wayne, Ron and Fred demonstrate the significance of persisting in the process of re-entry.

As reported earlier in the discussion of the psychological self, Fred seems to have an ongoing struggle with self-confidence. Thus, persisting in the presence of adversity seems to be clearly demonstrated. Fred shares his experience of coping with physical disability.

> I can't imagine that everyone feels like me. The suicide rate would be outrageous (tearful). That hasn't been far from my mind at times. (I ask: What keeps you going?) Knowing what affect it (suicide) would have on other people. (F: 551-555).

The perseverance to continue is also obvious in the search for employment. Fred states "you got to keep going and you know you got to go in there with a decent attitude. You're not going to be handed a job on a silver platter just because you're in a chair or just because you know whoever" (F: *321-325). Ron supports this view when he says "you can't give up after 20 rejections, you know you have to go on and on" (F: 1375-1376). As does Wayne who reminds us "you just go on and on and try harder and harder you know time and time again... (W: 891-892). You got to do it on your own. Nobody is going to do it for you" (W: 912-913). Thus persisting seems to be an action that the participants employed from the early to the final phase of the re-entry process.

In contrast to the action oriented state of 'doing', participants also mentioned 'being' type statements as characteristic of their personal attributes. This less tangible personal attribute has been nicely captured by Joseph who realizes that "it's what inside you that's (important)" (J: 47-48). Being dedicated, determined, responsible, and confident (or not) seemed to impact the re-entry experiences of the participants.

Levels of self-confidence varied among participants. However, other than Fred who indicates he will "struggle with it to the day I die" (F: 471), levels of self-confidence appeared to be quite high. For example, Jordan states "you know you got to believe in yourself, ...definitely self-esteem has a lot to do with it (career success) (JD:*184-186). I never had doubts in my ability to do the job, the task" (JD: *334-335). When Joseph was asked why he felt he did not have to hide his disability he replied "just attitude I guess". (J: 856) And Wayne elaborates when he says:

> well, it's (self-esteem) very important if you can keep self-confidence within yourself it will always rub off on your fellow employees. I mean the more self-confidence you can have, you know the better. You know it makes the atmosphere that you are working in a bit better, a whole lot better. I shouldn't say a bit better, but self-esteem and if you're down you're going to show it in what you're doing, that's going to be down. I mean you're not going to get that proposal out in time (W: 868-877).

Thus, self-confidence seemed to impact the employment experiences of the participants. Fred further supports this claim by declaring "my self-confidence issue impacts the whole employment thing and my life" (F: 589-590).

In addition to the participants' confidence levels, determination and commitment were inherent in their employment experiences. From the completion of specific job tasks to the approach taken by participants in the re-entry process, being determined and committed seemed essential.

When Wayne returned to work on his family farm he initially asked "how am I going to do all this stuff?" (W: 178-179). However with determination to continue his work on the farm he realized "you just do it. I don't know how, you just do it" (W: 181-183). Jordan also provides an example of how self determination seemed to be required in his day to day job duties.

> You know when they (coworkers) are awkward is when they try to help you because they don't know what they should do. A lot of the time I'll tell them, 'no I can do it myself'. And I'll struggle to do it. If I drop something at three o'clock in the afternoon after I've been there for six or seven hours and I haven't moved and I have to pick something up it's hard. And they see me going through that and think I'm having a tough time. And I am, but I'm used to that. It takes me time to do it, but I still have to do it (JD: 575-583).

And appropriately encapsuled by Wayne, he declares "nothing is impossible" (W: 726).

In review of the theme attributes of the successfully employed, the data suggest that participants appeared to engage in actions such as taking the initiative, setting goals, striving for normalcy, presenting professionally and persisting in the course of re-entering the work force. As well as 'doing' attributes, the participants appeared to have certain personal qualities that seemed to enhance their career success. Being dedicated and committed to their work, determined to re-enter the labour force and perform job related tasks, and responsible in their positions seemed important. As well, participants' level of confidence also seemed to impact on their employment experiences. In conclusion, 'doing' and 'being' seem to characterize the personal attributes of the participants.

The above results appear to indicate that research participants engaged in a four phase employment re-entry process following the onset of severe spinal cord injury. The process was described by participants as one inclusive of the reassessment of one's former vocation (evaluating pre-injury vocational plans), the establishment of marketable skills (developing new or complementary skills), a thorough search for competitive work (searching for employment) and gaining employment through the utilization of a window of opportunity.

In addition to a process of re-entry to employment that seems to involve the performance of activities consistent with career goals and distinctive of each phase, it was also inferred that factors of the workplace, and the context of the self (as defined by social, physical and psychological features) play an important role in the career success of research participants. Through this analysis I identified certain personal attributes of the successfully employed participants. The following chapter will illustrate that this information, along with a greater understanding of the process of re-entry to employment, will enable professionals to better assist unemployed persons with quadriplegia in their endeavours to reintegrate into the labour force.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Summary

When workers with intrusive physical limitations were asked about their experiences of re-entering the labour force following quadriplegic injury, their descriptions uncovered a process identified by distinct phases. Rather than linear movement through these phases, engagement in activities consistent with timely goals were described by research participants. Given that the impact of social supports and environmental variables (such as conditions of the work site) seemed significant to participants, it is reasonable to conclude that they were not isolated in the course of their re-integration into the labour force. Thus, it is important to recognize that the process of re-entry is a dynamic one that was apparently influenced by the components of the self and the factors of the workplace. As noted previously, figure 1 (on page 36) provides a pictorial representation of the dynamic nature of the re-entry to employment process.

The participants seemed to begin the re-entry process with the assessment of the pre-injury career. However, the onset of this action was not marked by a single peculiar event. Rather, a variety of motivating factors were mentioned by the participants. Several stated that a lack of opportunity in a rural community or boredom facilitated their engagement in the re-entry process. Most of the participants had apparently learned to manage the physiological changes imposed by the disability, were encouraged by their social supports and were adequately coping with life as a person with a disability. Thus, evaluating the pre-injury vocation seemed to be influenced by the status of the self. Movement through congruent phases was evidently also facilitated by the physical, social and psychological components of the self. For example, the individual may vacillate between phases drawing upon facets of the self in varying degrees with each situation they face. This point seems to be demonstrated by both Fred and Ron; Fred for always questioning his self-concept (F: 513), and Ron through a re-examination of his vocation during a period of unemployment (R: 769).

When the search for employment was imminent, factors of the workplace also seemed to influence the re-entry process. For some, temporary employment apparently contributed to questions of job security and self-doubt ensued. In turn, the strength of the psychological self appeared to be threatened and the importance of social supports magnified. This potential chain of events illustrates the dynamic and integrative nature of the re-entry to employment process. Even when competitive employment was secured, factors of the workplace and the stature of the self promoted a re-evaluation of one's career, skill development and/or an alternate search for employment.

As a further explanation to the model of the re-entry process, it is essential to note the degree of contribution of influencing factors. Participants described the psychological self as a moderator in all phases of the re-entry process. As such it was an inherent feature to their employment experiences. The social and physical selves seemed important to successful re-integration but to a lesser degree. This difference is represented pictorially in the model presented at the onset of chapter four. Moderating variables in the participation in labour force activity will be discussed in more detail in the succeeding pages of this discussion.

Relevance of the Literature

Although I was unable to locate literature that identified a specific process of re-entry to competitive employment, similarities and differences can be drawn from Navin and Myers' (1983) discussion of career development. They presented a lifespan model characterized by obvious phases. With the onset of physical disability the initial phase of career development entailed the acceptance of one's self in light of physical limitations (Navin & Myers, 1983). This process appears introductory to and part of the vocational evaluation period described by participants of this study. Similarly, Navin and Myers (1983) described the second phase of career development as career exploration. Unlike the model I have presented, Navin and Myers (1983) contend that the selection of a vocation consistent with skills and abilities does not begin until phase three. However, participants in this study seemed to indicate career identification in phase one (evaluating the pre-injury vocation) and then deliberately worked in order to develop skills to meet job entry requirements. As indicated by the re-entry process model, developing new or complementary skills was followed by the search for employment. The fourth stage of Navin and Myers' (1983) career development model entailed the re-evaluation of the chosen career. In this process Navin and Myers (1983) recognized the ever-changing self concept, as did the model presented in this study. However, my proposed process of re-entry for these participants identified the specific feature of occupational attainment. Given the challenges that were faced in the achievement of career goals, this appeared to be a significant payoff for the participants of this study.

Finally, Navin and Myers (1983) described the movement through career development phases as cyclical in nature. Conversely, the model presented in this thesis is moderated by components of the self and factors of the workplace in an integrated style. I suggest that the model currently proposed is a more dynamic system than that presented by Navin and Myers (1983). Navin and Myers' (1983) career development model entails "sequential steps in the career development of disabled persons" (p.41). indicate that this allows for entry into the model at any point with continual opportunity for "growth and change throughout the lifespan" (Navin & Myers, 1983, p.41). However, Navin and Myers' (1983) model suggests that sequencing is unchanged with each career step being followed by a predictable next step. In contrast, the model that I have developed, based on the experiences of the participants, suggests that sequencing can change. From the stories provided by the participants it appears as if the components of the self and factors of the work place influence or motivate this change. For example, having passed through the phases of re-entry Jordan eventually secured employment. However, he did not appear to be content with remaining in his first post-injury employment position. Rather, he chose to continue developing his career.

> Like I couldn't go any further, the guy who was running the project was looking at moving to Vancouver because of family reasons. So here you (the employer) have this pet project that he kind of wants to dump on me and I'm saying

> no, no, no. This is not what I want to do, this is not a goal in my life, it's a goal in your life. It was a stepping stone (JD: 188-195).

From this point in Jordan's career he returned to the preceding phase of re-entry and started searching for alternate employment. Thus, the dynamic nature of the re-entry process appears to be demonstrated.

The employment re-entry process following quadriplegic injury provides further support of Trieschmann's POE model (1980, 1987). The components of the POE model are evidenced in the re-entry process through the existence of moderators such as the constituents of the self and worksite factors. Thus, the outcome of vocational development appeared to be influenced by the interaction of psychosocial, organic and environmental agents. Successfully employed workers with quadriplegic injuries illustrated the complexity of this apparent interaction through the sharing of their re-entry to employment experiences. The importance of moderating components in the achievement of competitive work can also be tied to the existing literature on the barriers to employment, and the importance of self-concept in coping with physical disability. The following review of moderators illustrates how such components might influence the employment re-entry process.

Moderators in the Re-entry Process

The self in context.

As described in the Results chapter of this thesis, participants seemed to note the significance of the self in the re-entry to employment process. In doing so, it was recognized that the physical limitations imposed by the spinal cord injury led to the emergence of an altered self-concept. The context of this new identity in the re-entry process was affected by three components; the physical self, the social self and the psychological self. It will be demonstrated that these factors were instrumental in the development of a profile of the successfully employed male participants. Although one must generalize with caution, because of the limited sample of indeterminate representativeness, the pliable nature of the self seemed to contribute to surmounting the barriers to competitive employment.

Environmental barriers and personal care requirements are aspects of the physical self that apparently challenged the participants in the return to work process. Considerable expenditure of energy in the completion of work and daily living activities and the frustration of accessing the environment via wheelchair mobility presented barriers to entry into the labour force. As was indicated by McLoughlin, Garner, and Callahan (1987), such barriers inhibit entrance to and productivity within the workplace. This notion is further supported by Frank, Karst, and Boles (1989), who claimed that persons with disabilities are denied equal opportunity employment because of barriers and lack of reasonable accommodation of the physical disability. This apparent barrier was perceived diversely by research participants. Michael reported that when architectural inaccessibility prevented him from accessing a potential place of employment, he would merely discard it as an option. In his words " I was phoning around and like I asked you know, if it was accessible (the work site) and they (the employer) said well there are steps and stuff like that. I said well there's not much sense in me applying then is there. You make a joke out of it but it opened their eyes" (M: *485-490). In contrast, when Ron described his University experience he faced the challenge of architectural barriers head on. In spite of being carried up and down the stairs because of the unavailability of a ramp, and being ignored by a cab driver when he/she saw his wheelchair, Ron surmounted humiliation and carried on with the achievement of his goals (R: 177-179; 249-252). This apparent discrepancy in reaction to physical barriers may be explained by the context of the psychological self. Could it not be that the strength of the self-concept differed for each participant and was affected by their position in the re-entry process? Or that each participant used his energy differently such that failure to pursue work in an inaccessible environment meant not having to deal with awkward access issues? Rather, the individual might be better able to focus on getting a job. The uniqueness of the experience is therefore essential in understanding how each individual might cope with the physical limitations of the spinal cord injury in the process of accessing competitive employment.

Although this study supported the need for the erosion of physical barriers to the worksite, such obstacles did not seem to overwhelm participants in their quest for employment. Perhaps this is because of the strength of the supporting constituents of the self.

Another essential component of the self, the social self, was defined by the presence of peer guidance and support from significant others in the course of accessing work. In spite of in depth reviews (Alfred et al., 1987; DeVivo & Fine, 1982; El Ghatit & Hanson, 1978; Frank et al., 1989; Johnson et al., 1988; Lester & Caudill, 1987; McCarthy, 1982, 1986; Roessler, 1987; Shaw & McMahon, 1985; Trieschmann, 1988) of employment issues specific to persons with disabilities, little attention has been directed at the contribution of the social self in the course of vocational development. However, the participants in this study specified the apparent significance of the social self in their reflections of re-entering the labour force following severe spinal cord injury. As reported earlier, participants were generally encouraged by peers, guided by social service and vocational rehabilitation agencies and supported by friends and family (J: 383, JD: 426-431, F: 217-220, W: 172-174, M: 613-629).

The development and utilization of the above network may have supported participants in overcoming physical barriers. Feelings of empowerment that prevail from such accomplishments might further enhance the emerging self-concept. Trieschmann (1988) discussed this empowerment by relating locus of control to the process of adjustment to disability. She stated "those who perceive their own behavior as influencing the environment around them tend to be more active, less depressed, more productive and satisfied with life" (Trieschmann, 1988, p. 291). With the presence of these attributes it is likely that positive self-concept will be acknowledged in the adjustment and return to work process. Green, Pratt, and Grigsby (1984), further support the integral nature of the constituents of the self and in particular recognized the social environment as an important variable in the adjustment to spinal cord injury.

Since Trieschmann's (1982, 1988) POE model described adjustment as a process of balance restoration, and Green et al. (1984) described it as the reconstruction of identity (also assuming a developmental model), would the process of adjustment not also entail reintegration into competitive employment? The participants illustrated that the reconstruction of identity and adjustment to spinal cord injury seemed to be essential to success in employment endeavours. It is important to reiterate, however, that the psychological self develops not in isolation but along side the physical and social selves. The integrative style of the re-entry model is therefore maintained.

Participants described the challenge of living with a physical disability as an adjustment that entailed coping strategies from the time since onset of spinal cord injury to the present day (F: 450-472, JD: 125-128 , R: 61-66). This finding is supported by Green et al. (1984), who recognized that "adaptation to SCI is a long-term process because self-concept is so severely affected by cord injury" (p. 751). Since the process is gradual and extended over many years, it is not surprising that self-concept seemed to play a role in the attainment of competitive employment. Although Green et al. (1984) did not specifically address this issue, they found that "disabled individuals who function at their optimal level are successfully meeting society's expectations that disabled persons be maximally independent, doing all they can for themselves" (p. 754). With increasing visibility of persons with disabilities in mainstream society, primary labour market positions are being sought. In order for persons with disabilities to succeed economically in our society, they must experience access to competitive employment, job satisfaction, and career development. Thus, with a positive self-concept (or psychological self) persons with disabilities stand a better chance of functioning at an optimal level of independence (as is suggested by Green et al., 1984), which can be represented by active involvement in the labour force. Such participation challenges the entrenched stereotypes that have previously excluded them from the breadwinner role. Furthermore, the presence of a positive psychological self might promote the possibility of access to the labour force and, as a result, attitudinal barriers will be challenged.

The fact that all informants had been employed by an agency whose mandate was to assist persons with disabilities, or worked along side peers with disabilities, allows for several observations to be made. Could it be that understanding and tolerance of disability-related issues were greater in this environment than in a workplace with little experience with physical disability? Wayne alluded to the notion that he felt comfortable in a tolerant work milieu as he did not have to explain his physical needs (W: 445), as did Jordan (JD: 555-557). The occupancy of participants in a tolerant workplace might also explain the general lack of expression of attitudinal barriers confronted in the return to work process.

Perhaps the sanctioning environment also allowed for the development of self confidence while pursuing work-related activities. Fred reported that in his early post-injury employment history he was concerned about whether or not he could competently perform the duties of his job (F: 180-188). Having worked in an employment sector serving persons with disabilities he later indicated that "you keep it (the job) because you're doing a decent job. That's the only way you hold onto a job" (F: 372-373). This appears to reflect an altered self-confidence from the early to later employment experience. The work situation confirms the consolidation of components of the self and factors of the workplace (which will be discussed in greater detail in the following section) in the process of re-entry to employment after spinal cord injury.

In summary, as the participants were able to master the challenges of the physical environment, coping with the injury seemed more manageable. Perhaps at the same time as the injury being more manageable, an alteration of one's identity occurred. As was suggested by Wright (1983) and Trieschmann (1988), this altered identity in the coping process is acknowledged by the person with a disability. According to Green et al. (1984), acceptance of the injury and heightened self-concept occur when the self is redefined in positive terms. It would follow then that psychological confidence would emerge among participants. With heightened self-concept, participants embarked on re-entry into community life (including skill development and employment) and were encouraged to do so by their support systems. The amalgamation of all components of the self evidently contributed to the re-entry process. Notwithstanding, factors of the workplace were also identified as moderators in this process.

Factors of the workplace.

Employed workers with quadriplegia have also managed to permeate work place barriers. As previously noted, guidelines that govern the operation of the organization may manifest as procedural barriers for persons with disabilities. Agocs et al. (1992) recognized the significance of such barriers inferring that barriers inhibit equal access to and maintenance of employment. For example, they pointed out that the typical work establishment fails to advance flexibility with scheduling to accommodate personal care requirements, frowns on alternate techniques for task completion, and/or is ignorant of issues of environmental access (Agocs et al., 1992). This scenario predisposes workers with disabilities to disadvantage in competing for potential employment positions. However, the participants in this study were not challenged by such barriers. Rather, positive work place factors such as temporary employment and flexibility seemed to facilitate the re-entry to employment process.

Physiological changes such as loss of bowel and bladder function and reduced functional ability because of paralysis, placed a greater emphasis on personal care requirements and the completion of daily living activities. Although participants asked for concessions in the work schedule so that personal care needs could be met, the employees also reciprocated by lengthening the workday to ensure that obligations of the employment arrangement were fulfilled (M: 690-693, F: 309-315, W: 689-691).

Such commitment to the job was also illustrated in the acceptance of temporary employment positions. In this regard, all participants indicated a willingness to gain experience and prove one's capabilities through interim employment. Being hired through an Employment Equity program (JD: 249-251), a Canada Job Strategies grant (M: 436), or temporary placements (J: 564-575, R: *196-204) typified initial employment positions in the re-entry process. In spite of accompanying questions of job security, participants described this form of employment as an opportunity to develop skills, confidence and experience. Since another common feature of the workplace was the affiliation with other persons with disabilities, participants had access to social supports and could further develop confidence in a less threatening environment. Once again, support for an integrative model is achieved. The components of the self seem to be enmeshed with workplace factors during the process of re-entry to employment following quadriplegic injury. Although barriers to employment were evident in the re-entry process, the strength and supple nature of the self combined with the positive features of the workplace allowed for access to and maintenance of competitive employment. As a by-product of participants' description of their experiences in this process, a profile of personal attributes became evident.

Attributes of the successfully employed.

The identification of qualities inherent among this group of successfully employed males with quadriplegia allowed for the development of a profile. Since these participants seem to form a minority group (because they are competitively employed) among the population of persons with disabilities, such a profile may be useful as a model to others. It can also guide those who assist injured workers in their return to competitive employment, and employers who are in need of skilled workers.

It is interesting to note that although informants quickly identified the need for select personal qualities when advising persons with spinal cord injuries in the re-entry process, the researcher observed their humble nature when she praised them for their accomplishments. This further appears to solidify the posture of a profile of successfully employed males who are functionally quadriplegic. The following attributes were common among the participants in the present study.

In the process of becoming employed and maintaining an adequate level of performance on the job, participants portrayed a certain confidence in themselves in spite of the physical disability. In the early phases of re-entry, they were persistent with the search for employment while struggling with an altered sense of self. The establishment of straight-forward career goals and self-determination appeared to drive the individual to take charge of his life. For example, when Ron provides advice to the newly injured he says:

> I would tell them that you have to set goals for yourself. Number one is to start setting goals, and two, you have to start believing that you have the capability of doing it (the job). Because when you don't believe in yourself it's hard to get someone else to believe in you (R: 1357-1363).

Believing in oneself seemed to contribute to a positive attitude such that one participant stated, "If you want to do something bad enough you can do it. So, that's all there is to it" (W: 590-591).

Notwithstanding the earlier observation that the psychological self fluctuates at different times in the process of reintegration into the labour force, critical assessment of oneself in the workplace tends to foster the development of a responsible, dedicated and loyal employee. As indicated in recent research, employees with disabilities demonstrated their commitment to the organization through punctuality, attendance, productivity and commitment (Lester & Caudill, 1987; Muklevicz & Bender, 1988; Nathanson & Lambert, 1981; Schweitzer & Deely, 1982). In varying degrees these factors were also apparent among the participants in this study (W: 178-183; 529-546, JD: 257-271; 575-583, F: 301-304, M: 690-693; 695-698).

Finally, it would be remiss to neglect the importance of normalcy to research participants in the return to work process. In personal appearance (JD: 715-728) and opportunity for equal access and treatment (W: 709-715; M: 678-681) participants expressed a desire to achieve a sense of belonging through the reduction of differences. If one refers back to the literature review on disability and work in historical context (Daniels, 1981; Schneider & Ferritor, 1982; Vash, 1982), it is evident that stereotypical work roles continue to be challenged by persons with disabilities as they access the labour market.

In summary, these participants, as members of the population of workers with quadriplegic injuries, indicate that the following profile of attributes might be important for others in similar situations. I would expect other successfully employed males with quadriplegia to exude self-confidence, commitment to the work institution through loyalty, responsibility and dedication, to show persistence and determination during the process of re-entry and to strive for equal treatment in the day to day completion of work tasks. However, in keeping with the integrative style of the proposed model of re-entry, it may be difficult to achieve this standard if attitudinal, physical and procedural barriers block career development for persons with severe spinal cord injury.

As a moderating variable to the process of re-entry, the self must survive the assaults it faces so that the proposed profile may unfold. As suggested earlier, research informants identified certain elements of the work place that appeared to foster a tolerant environment so that resilience may occur. With an understanding of disability, such a work place potentially allows for the further development of work skills and confidence that one can competently perform the job. Unfortunately, barriers to employment remain, and idealistic work sites that foster integration of persons with severe spinal cord injury seem to be at a minimum. However, as recommended by McCarthy (1982) and Roessler (1987), a partnership between employers, rehabilitation professions and persons with disabilities may encourage reciprocal responsibility for the achievement of full integration and over time this goal may be realized.

Personal Reflections

Through my own employment position I have counselled persons with severe spinal cord injuries with regard to adjustment to disability, career planning and issues of accessibility. Over the years I have become increasingly aware of the physical, emotional and social impact that such a severe disability as quadriplegia can have on one's life. As stated earlier, my past relationship with co-workers and clients with disabilities has further heightened my sensitivity to the presenting challenges of the return to work process. The present project enriched my level of understanding yet again.

Having been privileged to listen to the stories of the participants, I now reconsider my pre-study biases. At the onset of this project I stated that ghettoization of persons with disabilities in positions of low pay is probable when they are employed via equity programs that are motivated by quotas. I did discover, through the interview process, that participants hired through such programs did not appear to be employed in less than desirable positions. Rather, participants apparently viewed the availability of the Canada Job Strategies grant, work placements, and Employment Equity programs as an opportunity for access to the labour force (JD: 249-251; 218-221, M: 436; 343-350, J: 564-574, W: *326-329, R: 502-506, F: 394-399). Given a chance to enter into an employment agreement, participants seemingly demonstrated their skills and commitment to the employer. Thus, at least among this group of individuals, ghettoization was not discernable.

In order to further examine this issue, similar research might be conducted with a more diverse population. All of the participants, but one (who was a student), in this study had labour intensive pre-injury occupations, had upgraded their skills considerably after injury and entered into professional work upon completion of skill development. Perhaps this chain of events is moderated by one's self-concept. In this study, it was common for the participants to be coping well with their disabilities and exuding confidence in their employment abilities. But what about persons with disabilities who have little self confidence and few marketable skills? Perhaps ghettoization exists for persons with disabilities but apparently not amongst the participants in this project.

In addition to my initial presupposition that ghettoization might have been an issue with the participants, I also anticipated that they would share negative experiences about vocational counsellors who had inadequately placed them in employment positions. Generally speaking, this aspect of vocational rehabilitation was omitted from their stories. Other than Jordan, who indicated frustration with a vocational counsellor who was assisting him with a career plan (JD: 510-521), the relationships with such professionals were seldomly discussed. In fact, I do not recall any of the participants mentioning the perceived problems with vocational rehabilitation professionals focussing too heavily on job placement.

It is important to note that although this group of participants had few complaints about the services of rehabilitation professionals, they may have been guarded in expressing their thoughts on this issue given that I am a rehabilitation counsellor. Although being acquainted with some of the participants might have encouraged the sharing of information, the negative aspects of their experiences may have been muted in order to present as willing participants. Therefore one must be cautious not to conclude that what participants said is true for all males who are functionally quadriplegic. Notwithstanding, I continue to believe that rehabilitation professionals do require additional information on the experiences of persons with disabilities as they enter the work force.

Having been relatively well informed about spinal cord injury prior to the study, I now have a much better understanding of the employment experiences of the participants. I must agree with Fred who states "levels of understanding are different" (F: 568-569). Past clients with spinal cord injury who insisted that I could not understand their experiences were probably right. For their understanding of disability is intimate and truly at a level different to mine. However, by listening to the personal stories of Jordan, Joseph, Wayne, Michael, Ron and Fred I conclude that my new level of comprehension is one step closer to theirs. For rehabilitation professionals who might read this project, their level of understanding will also differ. Nevertheless, by realizing that the experience of re-entering the work force following severe disability is unique to each individual, rehabilitation counsellors might also approach a greater level of understanding. From counsellors' doing so, persons with disabilities might be more willing to share their experiences, leaving us better equipped to assist them.

Considerations for Future Research

This study examined the employment experiences of re-entering the work force following the onset of severe physical disability. The information received from participants indicated a common re-entry process that appeared to be moderated by both internal and external factors. In reviewing the experiences of the participants a profile of attributes was presented. As such, the results of this study offer opportunities for further research in this field. I propose that the following topics could be given additional consideration.

Given that participants mentioned the reliance on peer support, further qualitative study might examine the form of this relationship. For example, was peer support given as mentorship or friendship? Did this peer support remain within the realm of the work place or was it also important in coping with disability outside of employment? At what point in time did this relationship develop? And, how was it utilized by the newly spinal cord injured person?

As an alternative to examining the mentorship from a qualitative perspective, one might also look at this relationship using quantitative methodology. For example, how many persons who have returned to work after spinal cord injury used a mentor? For what purpose was the relationship established? And, to what degree did it contribute to career success and development?

The identification of personal attributes among participants also offers the opportunity for ongoing research. It would be interesting to conduct a similar study with unemployed persons with spinal cord injury to see if attributes similar or dissimilar to those among this study's participants are apparent. If they are different, one might ask, how as a counsellor can these attributes be developed? And if unemployed persons with spinal cord injury have similar attributes, why is that they are not working?

The validity of the re-entry model could also be investigated. One might ask, does this model apply to wider populations? Such validity could be tested through the use of both quantitative and qualitative methodology. For example, using the qualitative approach the researcher might examine the experiences of persons with spinal cord injuries in similar and different situations to those of the participants of this study. Alternatively, a set of questions that capture the re-entry model could be tested with participants using quantitative methodology.

Finally, future research might also examine the issue of gender. Although research on employment for persons who have sustained spinal cord injury is minimal, enquiries have focused almost exclusively on males. Therefore, by examining re-entry to employment for women with similar injuries, further data would be obtained. Does the woman's experience differ from a man's? And, in what ways might it differ? With such information, gender differences could be given consideration in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services.

With the presentation of a model of re-entry that is dynamic, research opportunities are many. For example, further study may be directed at the interaction of the physical, social and psychological components of the self. Or, one might look exclusively at factors of the work place. The continuance of research in any of the above areas will add to the literatrue as well as our understanding of the return to work process following the onset of severe disability.

Conclusion

Disadvantage and discrimination have historically characterised the employment experiences of persons with disabilities. From societies where kinship united the community to those influenced by capitalism, persons with disabilities have been excluded from the modes of production or resigned to forms of non-competitive employment. Away from the mainstream economy, society developed attitudinal barriers in the form of stereotypes regarding the disabled community. Seen as incapable of independence, typical interchange between an individual with a disability and his/her able-bodied counterpart would traditionally entail a reaction of pity or avoidance. Such stereotypes have sanctioned the exclusion of persons with disabilities from employment by erecting barriers such as architecture and organizational policy that deny equal access. However, "persons with disabilities are challenging social myths and employment practices which have denied their right to equality in the workforce" (Ministry of Citizenship, 1992, p. 4).

The introduction of the Employment Equity Act (1986) has offered opportunity for employment to this disadvantaged group. However, employers indicate that they are not able to fill targeted positions as skilled workers are unavailable. In this regard, the provision of vocational assistance to those who require retraining may be utilized to develop a more qualified workforce. In contrast to the needs of the employer, members of the stakeholder group would like the Act to encompass a broader range of potential employers. Recognizing that expanded public policy may be met with resistance, change must occur on all levels in the economy. Persons with disabilities, potential employers, and society as a whole, must maintain a partnership with reciprocal responsibility for the achievement of full integration.

As a result of this qualitative enquiry, it seems as though integration is possible when all parties are mutually obliged to participate. It is evident that the participants worked toward developing skills to ensure marketability, employers loosened rigid organizational frameworks which resulted in flexible work schedules, and public policy offered an opportunity for initial access into the labour force.

Sharing of personal employment experiences also allowed for the development of a profile containing certain personal attributes of successfully employed workers with quadriplegia. Although one must be cautious to generalize to the greater population, such a profile might be valuable in the achievement of greater understanding of the challenges faced by this group of individuals in their quest for employment. By acknowledging the dynamic nature of the re-entry process, vocational rehabilitation practitioners might be better prepared to assist persons with severe spinal cord injury in the return to work. As well, the availability of such information to prospective employers might further encourage a focus on the skills of the applicant and not unnecessarily on the disability (McCarthy, 1982). Equal employment opportunities will ultimately allow access for qualified candidates. In turn, persons with disabilities will heighten their visibility in the workplace. The recognition of equality, and presence of workers with disabilities in the labour force will further dispel the stereotypes that lead to prejudice and discrimination. In this regard, persons with disabilities will find themselves in a better position to demonstrate job performance and loyalty to the employer, as was illustrated by the participants of this study.

At a societal level, awareness campaigns that bestow the importance of full integration are beneficial. A focus on the worker's capabilities rather than the disability will promote such unity. Economic advantages will also be realized through the development of a representative workforce. "A diversified workplace is an asset that could lead to new services or products, new customers and an increased ability to compete in a global marketplace" (Ministry of Citizenship, 1992, p. 8).

In summary, this thesis has illustrated that individuals with severe spinal cord injury who shared their experiences of the re-entry process surmounted barriers by belief in their abilities and through persistence with the search for employment. It was discovered that these participants seemed to be entrenched in a dynamic system that entailed aspects of the individual, the environment and the social support network. Strength in each of these components appeared to contribute to the success of this group. It was suggested that responsibility for career development rests with the individual, rehabilitation professionals, employers and society. Each entity must negotiate participation with the other so that access to employment for persons with disabilities is achieved. The communication of the unique experiences of persons with quadriplegic injuries in the process of re-entry to employment may facilitate such cooperation. A true partnership in the development of a representative workforce will benefit all players in the economic structure of Canadian society by diminishing stereotypes and enhancing opportuniies for skilled workers, regardless of disability.

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APPENDIX A:
RELEASE FOR ACCESS TO PARTICIPANTS
"ENQUIRY INTO THE EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE FOLLOWING THE ONSET OF SPINAL CORD INJURY"

Date: June 12, 1992

The Canadian Paraplegic Association hereby gives permission for Jodi Abbott to utilize the membership list of the Association to secure participants for her thesis project. It is our understanding that members will have the option to volunteer or resign participation in this research. I have read all pertinent participation forms and ma satisfied with the intent and form of this project.

Parker
Signature
Thomas O. Parker, Executive Director
Canadian Paraplegic Association, Alberta Division

June 12, 1992
Date

Abbott
Signature
Jodi Abbott
Student Researcher, University of Alberta (Department of Education)

APPENDIX B:
INSTRUCTIONS TO RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS; THE EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE FOLLOWING THE ONSET OF SPINAL CORD INJURY

Date: ______________________________

Dear: ______________________________

Thank you for your interest in my thesis research on the employment experience when re-entering the workforce following the onset of spinal cord injury. I value the unique contribution that you can make to my study and am excited about the possibility of your participation in it. The purpose of this letter is to describe the research and have you sign the attached participation release form.

I am using a qualitative research format which will provide descriptions of your experience. In this approach I hope to better understand or answer the question; What was your employment experience when re-entering the workforce following the onset of spinal cord injury? In this study employment is defined as the performance of job duties (within or outside your home) for 30 to 40 hours per week in exchange for competitive pay. All participants in the study are functionally quadriplegic and believe they are successfully employed.

Through your input as a participant, I hope to understand the employment experience from your frame of reference. You will be asked to recall specific events in your life which may relate to the issue I am researching. I would like to obtain vivid and accurate stories of what these experiences were like for you. The communication of thoughts, feelings, behaviours, events, places and people connected with your experience will help in understanding the employment experience. This process will involve an initial interview of approximately one hour (however, time will be unrestricted), a review of the written interview to check the accuracy of the interview material, and a follow-up session (approximately 1 hour) in which you will be able to further clarify, or add to your description of the employment experience. In total I anticipate a time commitment of approximately 4 hours spread across several weeks.

I value your participation in this project and thank you in advance for your commitment of time, energy and effort. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me and we will discuss the study in more detail. I can be reached at 454-5608 or 452-8287. Enclosed is a copy of a confidentiality form that you will sign should you agree to participate.

Sincerely,

Jodi Abbott

APPENDIX C:
PARTICIPATION-RELEASE AGREEMENT; THE EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE FOLLOWING THE ONSET OF SPINAL CORD INJURY

I agree to participate in a study of the employment experience following the onset of spinal cord injury as described in the attached instruction sheet. I understand the purpose and nature of the study and am participating voluntarily. I grant permission for the information to be used in the completion of the requirements for Masters of Education (Department of Educational Psychology) degree, including the written thesis, oral examination and possible publication of an article. The use of my story for other research will require that I give further permission. I understand that each interview will be audiotaped and then typed by the researcher. My name, names of people close to me, and my place of employment will be replaced by fictitious names so that it is not possible to identify me as one of the participants in this study. I am aware that reflecting on my employment experience may cause emotional distress and a referral for support and/or assistance will be offered by the researcher. I understand that I may withdraw participation at any time during the interview process without prejudice. I may also withdraw specific parts of the interview and will verify the final transcription prior to the analysis of the data.

In signing this form, I am aware that I may retain or transfer ownership of the interview data to the researcher. I understand that release forms and interview materials will be located in a safe place so as to ensure participant confidentiality.

I, ____, have read the above statement and attached instruction sheet and agree to participate as an interviewee under the conditions stated above.

Signature of Participant: ______________________________

Date: ______________________________

Signature of Researcher: ______________________________

Date: ______________________________

APPENDIX D:
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE; THE EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE FOLLOWING THE ONSET OF SPINAL CORD INJURY

Date: ______________________________

Dear : ______________________________

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my thesis study on the employment experience following the onset of spinal cord injury. In order to start the project an initial interview of approximately one hour has been arranged for ____ at ______________________________. I would like to meet you at ____ to conduct the session. If you are using DATS I would be pleased to cover the cost of your fare.

If you are unable to attend this interview, please contact me at 454-5608 or 452-8287 as soon as possible so that I may reschedule the appointment. Thanks again for your interest, I look forward to meeting with you on ____.

Sincerely,

Jodi Abbott

APPENDIX E:
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM

Name ______________________________ Date ________________

Address ____

Telephone (Work) ________________ (Home) __________________

Is it acceptable to contact you at work? Yes No

Birth Date ____

Date of Onset of Spinal Cord Injury ______________________________

Cause of Spinal Cord Injury ____________________________________

Level of Lesion ____________________

Please describe the characteristics of your physical disability:

____

____

____

____

Pre-injury Level of Education ___________________________________

Pre-injury Employment History (List the most recent first):

Place of Employment	Position	Duties	Hours per week	Year

Post-injury Educational Development (Please list any upgrading, training, education, etc., pursued after the onset of your physical disability):

Institution	Description of Training	Year

Post-injury Employment History (List the most recent first):

Place of Employment	Position	Duties	Hours per week	Year

Do you consider yourself to be successfully employed? Yes No

Note: Please return this document along with the signed participation release form in the enclosed envelope.

APPENDIX F:
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Pre-interview:

1. Thank the Informant
2. Explain the purpose of the study and review the signed consent form
3. Set up the tape-recorder

Questions:

With the intent to gain an understanding of the employment experience following the onset of spinal cord injury the following are questions that may be addressed in the interview session. These questions will be asked in an order appropriate for the interview format to allow for elaboration of the informant and flexibility on the part of the researcher.

1. How many years have you been spinal cord injured?

2. Could you please describe your level of physical functioning and whether your injury has affected your ability to fulfil the requirements of your employment?

3. If I were to enter your place of employment what workplace modifications or technical aides would I see in your environment that may assist you in your work?

4. Tell me about your employment experiences since the onset of your spinal cord injury.

5. What type of job are you presently employed at? How is this job relevant to what you were doing prior to your injury? How would you compare your pre-injury and post-injury employment in terms of similarities and/or differences?

6. When career planning after the rehabilitation process, what were your perceived prospects for employment?

7. What did you do to plan for the re-entry process?

8. When you wheeled through the door for your first interview what was it like? Can you describe what you saw? What, if any, reactions were present among those who interviewed you?

9. Once employed, to what degree did you feel welcomed by your co-workers?

10. How do you think the re-entry process and attainment of successful employment would differ if you were not disabled?

11. If you could advise an organization on the integration of workers with a disability, what would you tell them?

12. If you could advise people with spinal cord injuries about getting a job, what would you tell them?

13. Please describe the most memorable positive and uncomfortable situations you have experienced in your work?

14. Have you ever felt the need to hide some aspect of your disability while at work? Please describe and give reasons why.

APPENDIX G:
SAMPLE FIELD NOTES

Feb 27, 1992

Interview day (Fred)! Called Fred to confirm. He's still okay with it. I'm to meet him at the XXX at 6 p.m. Arranged tape recorder and have tried it out. Will write more after session!!! ... Interview completed. Wow what an emotional experience for the informant. Somehow I feel drained from listening to his experiences. We spoke for approximately 2.5 hours-the time went very fast. Although we spoke about the reintegration experience, I can't believe how issues of self esteem and confidence kept creeping in. At one point in the interview I offered to not transcribe when issues seemingly unrelated to the work experience were brought up. The informant told me that would be unnecessary as these issues had an effect on the work experience.

I have reservations about whether I managed to separate my role as counsellor and researcher. When I reflect on it, perhaps I expressed empathy and did not attempt to counsel - however, I'm not convinced of this!

When the issue of suicide was brought up, I felt quite uncomfortable. I believe I suggested help - but feel quite ill that this individual, who I know quite well, had not approached the issue before. I'm sad as he is a good person, worthy of success yet faces so many obstacles! Will write more as I begin to transcribe.